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**An exploration of the dialectic between theory and method
in ethnography**

by

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Contents

<i>Contents</i>	2
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	3
<i>Declaration</i>	4
<i>Abstract</i>	5
<i>Table of abbreviations</i>	6
1. What is ethnography?	7
2. Ethnography, analysis and theory.	30
3. The case for Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball.	53
• The differentiation-polarisation thesis.	
• Hammersley's (1985) model.	
• Lambart (1976, 1982).	
4. Differentiation-polarisation theory	
following Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball.	100
• Abraham (1989) and Quine (1974).	
• School transition studies.	
• Methodological innovations.	
5. Goldsworth Comprehensive School.	146
6. Conclusions for differentiation-polarisation theory.	220
Conclusion. Theorising through ethnography:	
'the business of grounded research.'	236
<i>References</i>	243
<i>Appendices</i>	258

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

The thesis poses three core questions:

1. What is ethnography?
2. What is the role of theory in ethnography?
3. What (and how) can ethnography contribute to the cumulative development of sociological theory?

The thesis develops a reflexive awareness of the persuasiveness of the theory-method dialectic in ethnography. It explores the processes through which ethnography generates knowledge through social research and hence the basis upon which ethnography rests its claims about the social world. The thesis conducts a specific case study of one ethnographic 'theory' that was developed through a series of classic ethnographic research monographs. The context of the theory in relation to the historical development of ethnography is evaluated and an area for further theoretical development identified.

This area was then tested in new, original fieldwork with the aim to contribute to further theoretical cumulation. The thesis offers two conclusions. The first considers what lessons have been learned through the approach to theorising used by the thesis and if it represents a model for future ethnographic research to follow. The final conclusion of the thesis calls for a greater awareness of the capacity of ethnography to contribute to theory cumulation. It suggests the role of theory has become more implicit than explicit. However, the ethnographic research conducted here has, albeit in one small case study, acknowledged the potential of theory *for* ethnography. This is vital if ethnography is to offer a sophisticated approach to social research and to contribute to sociological knowledge.

Abbreviations.

L.E.A.	- Local Education Authority.
P.G.C.E.	- Postgraduate Certificate of Education.
C.D.T.	- Craft, design and technology.
I.T.	- Information technology.
P.S.E.	- Personal and social education.
R.E.	- Religious education.
P.E.	- Physical education.
C.o.E.	- Church of England
R.C.	- Roman Catholic
NQT	- Newly qualified teacher.

CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS ETHNOGRAPHY?

Only in modern times have university students been systematically trained to examine all levels of social life meticulously. I'm not one to think that so far our claims can be based on magnificent accomplishment. Indeed I've heard it said that we should be glad to trade what we've so far produced for a few really good conceptual distinctions and a cold beer.

(Goffman 1997 [1983]:261)

Introduction.

The history of ethnographic research is long and enjoys a rich and well-established literature. In relation to British sociology, the technique is a relative newcomer. As the opening quotation by Goffman observes, the meticulous (if we can take him to mean micro) analysis of social life has appeared on sociology undergraduate and postgraduate methodology courses only in the past thirty or so years (Burgess 1994).

This opening chapter seeks to define the essence, or essences, of ethnography. The chapter draws upon key texts in the contemporary methodological literature to explore ethnography on three levels. First, a definition of ethnography in terms of research methods, second, the links between ethnography and well-established research traditions and, finally, the more general characteristics of contemporary ethnography's approach to social research. The final section attempts to capture the ethnographic *style* of research, expressed another way, the *ethos* underpinning ethnographic work. The chapter then evaluates a critique Hammersley makes of ethnography and the nature of the knowledge ethnography generates about the social world. Indeed, the chapter ends by challenging the very production of such knowledge; knowledge – but to what end?

The methodological literature.

The methodological literature surrounding the ethnographic approach has grown dramatically in recent decades (Agar 1996). Several texts have emerged to become the 'bibles' of their times (Smith 1988).¹ In the past two decades, authors Burgess, Delamont, Wolcott, Hammersley and Atkinson² have become established authorities,³ in both their specialist fields and on methodological matters. Their commentaries, without excluding examples from other authors, are used here to offer established and well-respected reflections on the nature of ethnography.⁴

Towards a definition of ethnography.

Hammersley (1998) attempts to define ethnography by first pointing out its diverse meaning. He finds ethnography is simultaneously perceived to be qualitative research, case study research, participant observation and life history (or histories) research. Delamont (1992) offers a similarly broad definition by listing the various techniques that ethnography can involve, such as open-ended interviews, oral history, life history interviews, personal constructs and mental map studies, observation studies, participant and non-participant observation. In revealing the wide range of

1 Early examples of these include Small and Vincent (1894), Thomas (1909) and Park and Burgess' (1921) Chicago School 'green bible' (Smith 1988). Blumer (1939) similarly comments on the defining influence of Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) in both their method and accompanying methodological note.

2 This is primarily a British selection, Wolcott being the only American. The thesis restricts itself to the British debate, although there are both overlaps and important distinctions between Anglo and American forms of ethnography (Wolcott 1982, Atkinson 1999, Atkinson et al 1993).

3 Burgess (1982, 1984), Delamont (1992), Wolcott (1994, 1995, 1999), Hammersley (1992, 1998, 2000), Atkinson (1990, 1996), Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) are their central methodological publications to date.

4 Whilst all of these authors have written extensively on methodological issues, some have concentrated upon other areas more recently, such as Burgess' work on Higher Education, training and evaluation (Burgess 1993, 1997) and Atkinson's work on advances in bio-technology and genetics. In addition, Burgess and Atkinson's move into university management has not curtailed their interest in field research. They both continue to publish in the area (Pole and Burgess 2000) and the latter recently conducted his own, small-scale funded ethnography of Cardiff Opera House.

research activities ethnography can include, both authors establish that simply equating ethnography with qualitative research methods does not provide ethnography with a clear character or essence. This is demonstrated to great effect by Dey (1993), when he lists over thirty qualitative research techniques.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) make a useful distinction in their argument that research methods cannot be separated from the process that determines their selection. This is an important analytic point, which moves to consider the logic *underpinning* the use of qualitative methods. Their suggestion, therefore, is that ethnography is not merely a method, or collection of methods, but rather *the principled application of those methods*.

Delamont (1992) strikes an analogy between research and a long (but fulfilling) journey. The metaphor of a journey is a useful one to explore the principles underpinning ethnography, their origins and their refinement over recent decades.

The ethnographic journey: a brief history of ethnography.

The use of a metaphor of a journey in relation to ethnography captures the firsthand nature of ethnographic work. Delamont (1992) argues that ethnography, rather than merely exercising of a series of observational techniques or methods values firsthand contact and the primacy of being present in the field. The metaphor of the journey also reveals that by exposing the researcher to new social worlds, new discoveries are made possible:

Almost by definition the research scholar does not have firsthand acquaintance with the sphere of social life he [sic] proposes to study. He is rarely a participant in that sphere and usually is not in close touch with the actions and experiences of the people who are involved in that sphere.

(Blumer 1969:35)

The ethnographic journey therefore involves travelling to and exploring unknown social worlds. The methodological literature celebrates the examples of famous ‘journeys’ by previous ethnographers, described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) as *topos*, or oft-cited exemplars of an approach or method. Bronislaw Malinowski’s (1922) emphasis upon close, detailed fieldwork is cited as one of the key developments in both anthropology and British ethnography.

Malinowski’s new and quite radical emphasis upon firsthand contact developed in the nineteen twenties and thirties re-shaped his discipline of anthropology, and his influence reaches into modern ethnography:

Before the 1920s many anthropologists relied on explorers, traders, missionaries and government officials for accounts of the people they studied. [...] Malinowski exhorted his colleagues to go into the villages to see the natives at work, to sail with them on their ventures with other tribes and to observe them fishing, trading and working. The data that would be obtained would then be based on first-hand observations rather than second-hand accounts that had been squeezed out of reluctant informants.

(Burgess 1984:12,13)

Wolcott (1982, 1995) discusses the reasoning underpinning ethnography’s stress on firsthand contact. The objective of close-contact ethnographic work is to gain a detailed insight into and an understanding of the research site. The ethnographic journey therefore involves “attending carefully to context, spending adequate time in the field getting to know it thoroughly” (Wolcott 1982:72). Another oft-cited anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, demonstrates Wolcott’s point and the importance of studying a social world in close detail.

Geertz (1973) reveals the insight that rich ethnographic research can provide by unfolding the diverse meaning winking possesses in different societies. For example, on immediate observation, it may appear that a person has a nervous twitch or that something is irritating their eye. However, it is only with sustained observation that winking can be appreciated to be a subtle form of communication. A key ethnographic research objective is to gain this rich understanding or, to use Weber's term, *verstehen* of a social world. It is only through such a close, sustained engagement that complex social forms are rendered visible (Delamont 1992, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 and Wolcott 1995).

Delamont's (1992) metaphor of ethnography as a journey can again be used to demonstrate what implications the concept of *verstehen* holds for ethnography.

Delamont's (1992) metaphor holds that ethnography is a journey of discovery. The concept of *verstehen* further suggests that the journey should be conducted in a tone of appreciation. Wolcott (1982) reveals this emphasis is derived from ethnography's association with anthropology, which he describes as a "research style born in a tradition of deferred judgment" (Wolcott 1982:72). The argument Wolcott (1982) is therefore making states that "traditional ethnographic concerns [are] for description and interpretation rather than for rendering judgment" (Wolcott 1982:83).

Wolcott's (1982) point can be used to make a further distinguish between early examples of the tradition and its contemporary form. If Malinowski is used as *topos* once again, something of the changing character of ethnography is revealed:

At ten I went to Teyava, where I took pictures of a house, a group of girls, and the *wasi*, and studied construction of a new house. On this occasion I made one or two coarse jokes, and one *bloody nigger* made a disapproving remark, whereupon I cursed them and was highly irritated. I managed to control myself *on the spot*, but I was terribly vexed by the fact this *nigger* had dared to speak to me in such a manner.

(Malinowski 1967:272, original emphasis)⁵

Malinowski's contribution to the development of anthropology and ethnography is enshrined in the ethnographic literature. Wolcott (1982) finds Malinowski's study both "classic" and "inadequate" and two further examples from much later ethnographic projects explain why when they demonstrate how the expectations of the contemporary ethnographer in the field have changed over time (Wolcott 1982:91).

Ethnographic studies of criminal sub-cultures and activities typify the research style of deferred judgement Wolcott (1982) describes. These studies are not concerned with documenting rule-breaking behaviour, but rather seek to understand the meanings associated with 'deviant' activity. A classical example is Becker's (1963) study of marihuana users. Becker (1963) concentrated upon how smoking marihuana was a socially learned activity (in terms of heightening and maximising its enjoyment), rather than assuming there was anything inherently deviant in the activity itself.⁶ Finnegan's (1989) study of the social world of musicians represents a more contemporary, and more modest, example of the tone Wolcott (1982) favours:

Milton Keynes is not of course typical of all English towns, but it is in any event a real place which contains *real* people experiencing and creating musical forms which they themselves value.

(Finnegan 1989:xi-ii, original emphasis)

5 A footnote explains the term 'nigger' was "a colloquial term commonly used by Europeans, at the time Malinowski was writing" (Malinowski 1967:154). It should also be noted that the text itself is a translation from the original Polish.

6 Becker (1963) describes the 'labelling' of activities as 'deviant' reflects the dominant values of society rather than any intrinsic element of the act itself, although Becker's claim has been a matter of considerable contention within sociology (Hammersley 2000).

Finnegan (1989) was at pains to emphasise the meaning of an involvement in music for the inhabitants of Milton Keynes. However, she importantly put her own musical tastes to one side during her research. For example, Finnegan (1989) was herself a musician and during her ethnography encountered musical forms beyond her own interests, but her study did not differentiate between types of music on the basis of her own dispositions. The examples of Malinowski, Becker and Finnegan capture that standards of ethnographic research have changed over time. Ethnography becomes not merely a collection of techniques of data collection, but rather the strategic use of those techniques to achieve particular objectives whilst also remaining cognisant of *how* they are used. It is not enough, as we have seen, to make the journey, but rather there is a need to be informed in the arts of the traveller.

The strategic journey.

Wolcott, perhaps more than any of the other leading ethnographers identified here, discusses the art of ethnographic field research (Wolcott 1995, 1999). In his use of the term 'art,' Wolcott moves away from the romance of the ethnographic journey (implicit in Delamont's metaphor) to emphasise the role of strategy in ethnographic work. For example, Wolcott (1995) extends the idea of deferred judgement to argue that "in fieldwork one must be prepared to fake everything" (Wolcott 1995:123).

Wolcott (1995) emphasises that ethnographers are purposely strategic in the methods they apply, in order to facilitate the kind of data they collect. This not only involves impression-management by the researcher, but also a certain degree of artful strategy in considering how best to access a social setting. The study of the professions provides an example:

Few investigators have admitted the libidinal dimension of fieldwork. Yet, it is quite clear that certain sorts of data are more readily obtained by personable young women. Much as we may regret this on ideological grounds, it is always a temptation to engage such a person, particularly in studies of powerful older men where they may perceive less of a threat and be drawn into indiscretion more readily than by a male investigator.

(Dingwall 1980:881)

Wolcott's (1995) definition of ethnography emphasises that ethnography is a strategic art, yet underpinned by the principle aim to discover information. As Dingwall (1980) quotes Wax (1971), "a coquette is in a much better position to learn about men than a nun" (Dingwall 1980:880).

Wolcott's (1995, 1999) identification of the need for strategic, almost subversive, research techniques, can be related to an important shift to apply anthropological techniques to the study of local contexts. The Chicago School of Sociology is the famed *topos* within the methodological literature (Burgess 1984, Atkinson 1990, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) and its status is reflected in a growing, specific literature (Bulmer 1984, Smith 1988, Fine 1995, Platt 1999):

The genre of the sociological ethnography was heavily influenced by early classics from the Chicago School of sociology. [...] Whereas in the early decades of this [20th] century anthropological fieldworkers were turning outwards to the study of 'exotic' peoples [...] the Chicago ethnographers found equally remarkable forms of social organisation and culture in their own backyard.

(Atkinson 1990:28-9)

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe that the growing city of Chicago and the influx of immigrants created a fertile setting for sociologists to explore the social experience and lives of Chicago's inhabitants. Chicago School research into the ecology of the city has been described as a mosaic of ethnographic studies that captured the diversity of the city:

Drawing on the analogy of plant and animal ecology, they set out to document the very different patterns of life to be found in different parts of the city of Chicago, from the 'high society' of the so-called 'gold coast' to slum ghettos such as Little Sicily.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:9)

Burgess (1984) views the Chicago School's transposition of ethnographical techniques to the study of close social worlds brought field research 'home.' For example, Finnegan (1989) captures the novelty of ethnographic research techniques when applied to local social worlds:

Rather late in the day I realised that what was going on around me was an equally interesting subject, linking with many of the traditional scholarly questions about the social contexts and processes of artistic activity and human relationships.

(Finnegan 1989:xi)

Finnegan (1989) sees both the value of studying our own backyards and also that studying local contexts introduces new methodological challenges. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) similarly recognise that:

Even when he or she is researching a familiar group or setting, the participant observer is required to treat this as 'anthropologically strange', in an effort to make explicit the presumptions he or she takes for granted as a culture member.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:9)

The ethnographic study of local contexts therefore makes new demands of the researcher and ethnography, in turn, has responded by developing the very art of engaging in social research.

The ethnographic product.

The chapter, to this point, has defined ethnography as a qualitative research method. The metaphor of the journey, through the transposition of its characteristics of exploration and discovery onto ethnography, adds more to a purely technical

definition by capturing the spirit of enquiry intrinsic to ethnographic work. However, the metaphor is unsatisfactory through its very romance with the *process* of the journey, rather than emphasising the value of its outcomes. Whilst it may be a truism to suggest the conclusion of a journey motivates the journey itself, the nature and form of the ethnographic 'end product' is particularly contentious.

Ethnography, naturalism and positivism.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) relate the development of ethnographic research techniques and the claims about the knowledge they produce back to a clash between competing philosophical positions. The typology they set up is "positivism versus naturalism" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:3). It is the distinctions between these two approaches, that Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue underpin later debates between quantitative and qualitative researchers and therefore that shape contemporary ethnographic approaches to knowledge and theory generation.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) identify positivism with the twentieth century physics' model of research. The model holds that that the logic of the experiment in the physical sciences is appropriate for the study of society. Positivism argues that such a research process renders the formulation of universal laws not only possible, but also to be the very rationale for research. The research model's methodological emphasis is upon *directly observable* phenomena, arguing that to do otherwise risks appealing to metaphysical (and therefore unsubstantiated) suppositions. The research emphasis lies upon standardised measures of observation that are replicable by others and during which every effort is made to eliminate the effect of the researcher. It is only on the basis of such an approach that regular relationships between variables can

be deduced. The role of further research is to use measures that are standard between researchers and therefore establish relationships between variables hold across all relevant circumstances.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe that the translation of this method to the social sciences has generally relied on statistical probabilities to establish relationships between variables. An emphasis such as this upon statistics means that the findings of research conducted in this manner reveal “relationships [that] have only a high probability of applying across relevant circumstances” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:4). The definition of samples within this style of research therefore becomes extremely significant.

The key criterion of success, in terms of research outcomes, for positivism is the formulation of generalisable research findings. The findings, and hence the conclusions, of this approach rest their authority on their model of research. Their emphasis upon standardised procedures, neutral language and statements of observation based upon directly observable phenomena combine to create a theoretically neutral basis for producing theory that is “beyond doubt” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:4):

It is the procedures employed in the context of justification that are held to mark science off from common sense, since they involve the rigorous assessment of alternative theories from an objective point of view.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:5)

In contrast to positivism’s model of knowledge generation and cumulation, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) use nineteenth century biology to describe an exemplar of an opposing typology; naturalism. The naturalistic model of social

research reverses the principles of positivistic method, as the researcher takes almost a passive role in deference to the social world under study. Naturalism demands that the social world should be studied in its natural setting, undisturbed by the researcher and that the researcher's attitude is one of appreciation towards the phenomenon under study:

A first requirement of social research according to naturalism, then, is fidelity to the phenomena under study, not to any particular set of methodological principles, however strongly supported by philosophical arguments.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:7)

The proper focus of social research within a naturalistic model therefore falls upon the *context* of action and how people in a particular setting see and understand their own actions and those of others. It does not involve, therefore, the imposition of research hypotheses onto the social world.

The tenets of naturalism and positivism are therefore quite different in their conceptualisation of how the social world may best be studied. Naturalism's emphasis lies upon *verstehen* and the interpretation of the social actor. Such a stance rejects positivism's claim that general laws of human behaviour can be created, as naturalism holds that human behaviour can only be properly understood as a continual process of construction on the basis of people's interpretations of their situation.

Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) brief typology of the essences of positivism and naturalism's research models reveals the core disagreements between their processes of knowledge generation. They approach a definition of ethnography by using these two basis typologies to temporarily side-step the baggage of contemporary debates, in which they find positivism has "become little more than a term of abuse" and

therefore obscured the meaning of the two positions (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:3). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) revisit positivism and naturalism in order to ground and progress towards their own conceptualisation of modern ethnography:

Despite their differences, positivism and naturalism share much in common. They each appeal to the model of natural science, albeit interpreting it in different ways. As a result, they are both committed to the attempt to understand social phenomena as objects existing independently of the researcher.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:10)

Hammersley clarified the precepts of modern ethnography by paying particular attention to qualitative researchers' responses to positivism and naturalism's research models (Hammersley 1992, 1998). Hammersley (1992) examined how contemporary ethnographers answer the criticisms levelled at ethnography by positivism and naturalism. The divergent views ethnographers offer reveals that, whilst there remains considerable debate over ethnographic techniques, each technique is underpinned by epistemological and ontological views concerning the final ethnographic product. That is, the very purposes to which ethnographic methods are applied and to what end.

The core problem Hammersley (1992) identifies is that "the differences in attitude to natural science [as a model of research for social science] do not seem to map on to the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research in a straightforward way" (Hammersley 1992:165). Therefore a variety of research styles have appeared, most notably involving a dualism between quantitative and qualitative research methods.

One response outlined by Hammersley (1992) adopts an oppositional stance towards alternative methods of research. In relation to ethnographic research results and

goals, Hammersley (1992) views this as one position which attempts to mirror the status and authority of dominant paradigms of social research, such as quantitative research. For example, the argument here becomes that ethnography is capable of producing results with similar certainties as quantitative methods. Therefore small-scale research is capable of producing general theory, even from case studies (cf. Yin 1984).

A second position ethnographers have adopted in defence of their research approach recognises the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. This position not only seeks a *détente* between quantitative and qualitative approaches, but also advocates their collaboration. This research approach is based on a 'triangulation' of qualitative and quantitative methods. It no longer involves a blind adherence to qualitative techniques and hence recognises the limitations and unsuitability of the ethnographic approach in certain research situations. The principle rather becomes that the method suit the task, in which a plurality of methods may be used alongside one another. For example, at different stages of the research, different methods could be employed. Burgess (1982) uses Sieber (1973) as an example of this position. Sieber (1973) presents a model of research that aims to 'correct weaknesses' by 'cross-checking' with other qualitative and quantitative techniques (Sieber 1973). This model therefore rejects the polemical divide between "two methodological subcultures" (Sieber 1973:1335).

The final response by ethnographers that Hammersley (1998) characterises is the assertion that ethnography represents a totally distinct paradigm within the social sciences. This claims that ethnography is different to other forms of research and

therefore the comparison or combination of ethnography with traditional models of scientific research is impossible. This position holds that the two models of research possess different epistemologies and that ethnographic knowledge is based upon inductive (rather than deductive) research processes. This approach attends to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) model of research, which holds that ethnographic knowledge and theory is only of value if it is discovered through the data. From this stance, comparisons between positivism and inductivist ethnography are therefore pointless, as they are so radically different. Like the first position Hammersley (1992) outlines, this serves to separate, and indeed reify, ethnography above other forms of research.

Hammersley (1992) finds little comfort in the polemical exchanges between quantitative and qualitative researchers that characterised methodological debates in recent decades. He considers that "in epistemology, as in methodology, dichotomies obscure the range of options open to us" (Hammersley 1992:171). Hammersley and Atkinson have individually and collectively refined and positioned the concept of reflexivity within ethnography as a means to confront the criticisms levelled at ethnography.

Hammersley, Atkinson and reflexive ethnography.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) find the natural sciences model of research "no longer represents the prestigious model it once did" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:2). They use the typologies of positivism and naturalism as a basis upon which to establish the grounds on which modern ethnography *can* rest its research claims. Neither positivism nor naturalism, they argue, present a satisfactory model, as the former reifies the concept of objectivity, whilst the latter fails to recognise that "there

is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 17).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue ethnography must reposition itself and strike a balance between a commitment to empirical research with a scepticism towards the knowledge statements ethnography can make:

there are elements of positivism and naturalism which must be abandoned; but it does not require rejection of all the ideas associated with those two lines of thinking. Thus, we do not see reflexivity as undermining researchers’ commitment to realism. In our view it only undermines naïve forms of realism which assume that knowledge must be based on some absolutely secure foundation. [...] For us, the primary goal of research is, and must remain, the production of knowledge.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:17)

However, we can see here that the model of (reflexive) ethnography Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) are advocating has an end goal firmly in sight – the production of knowledge. Their commitment towards ethnography does not rest on a belief that it constitutes a privileged means to access and study the social world. It is in their use of the concept of reflexivity involves that ethnography’s limitations are identified and accepted:

What this represents is a rejection of the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the particular biography of the researcher, in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics. [...] Reflexivity thus implies that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:16)

The importance of the researcher’s role in the research process is not new, nor unique to sociology. Carr (1987), in a biting critique of historiography, argued that the historical epoch of the time and the individual biography and background of the historian directly influence the approach and interpretation of the historian (Carr

1987). Hammersley and Atkinson's application of reflexivity to ethnography, places *all aspects* of the research process under scrutiny:

the notion of reflexivity recognises that texts do not simply and transparently report an independent reality. Rather, the texts themselves are implicated in the work of reality-construction. This principle applies not only to the spoken and written texts that are produced and interpreted by social actors, but to the texts of social analysts as well. From this point of view, therefore, there is no possibility of a neutral text. The text - the research paper or the monograph, say - is just as much an artefact of convention and contrivance as is any other cultural product.

(Atkinson 1990:7)

Hammersley and Atkinson's account of reflexivity states that observation, recording and analysis are not separate elements of the research process. The research act is not a neatly categorised series of stages, nor a linear progress. A reflexive ethnography acknowledges that research is intrinsically messy and problematic. Reflexivity places a primacy on the role of the researcher in the research process, not merely in the sense that the personal characteristics of the researcher affect the data they can collect, but rather that the researchers' predispositions shape the direction, or construction, their account itself (Atkinson 1990, Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

Hammersley and Atkinson, individually and together, in their use and refinement of reflexivity promote a definition of ethnography. Reflexivity means constantly questioning and reflecting upon what you are doing in the field and evaluating your data and analysis at every stage of the research. Reflexivity involves engaging with a series of questions throughout the research process. For example, what was the basis of your selection, namely, what are you omitting? What status is placed upon informal conversations, compared with formally recorded interviews, for instance? Indeed, what could be the implications of the decision you reach later on? This also indicates that the question of access remains critical through the study and not merely

at the outset of the fieldwork. For instance, who granted access and how has this skewed your entrance to the field and your developing analysis? Fortunately, Delamont (1992) offers a check on such questions before a position of infinite regression is reached. Her solution to excessive navel-gazing recommends that:

As long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served.

(Delamont 1992:9)

Delamont's (1992) position contrasts with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) more formal sense of when the period of data collection can satisfactorily concluded. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue the process of data analysis (which itself takes place throughout the fieldwork) is only finished when the data is conceptually exhausted. Delamont (1992) perhaps more pragmatically describes analysis finishes when the researcher is exhausted.

The development of qualitative data analysis packages⁷ presents the possibility to eliminate some of the monotony of physically managing qualitative data. The role of computer analysis software has received both criticism and support. Dey (1993), Delamont (1992) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) are optimistic, although, like Sprokkereef *et al* (1995), share some concern that computers should not replace the ethnographer's own need for thought development and control over the data.

Computers, they argue, cannot be used as a substitute for thinking. Computers' use in data analysis serves to emphasise the human element to research. For example, the researcher's frame of mind is important, as research is essentially a human process. Delamont (1992) argues research should not be a chore but enjoyable. Wolcott

⁷ For example, The Ethnograph, NUD*IST and Nvivo.

(1995) emphasises a spirit of *joie de vivre*. Progressing through the logic through which their understanding of reflexivity lies recognises that their position is not arbitrary, but reached through a detailed consideration and awareness of ethnography's historical development.

The concept of reflexivity emphasises the inherent messiness of all ethnographic research and in doing so promotes a definition of ethnography. That is, the concept of reflexivity contains inferences about the nature of ethnography. Whilst reflexive ethnography may not offer a simple, clear-cut definition of ethnography,⁸ the logic is the same as that applied by Rock (1979). Rock (1979) suggests that symbolic interactionism can most easily be defined by stating what it is *not*, rather than attempting to offer a clear set of principles. Reflexivity promotes this same sense of uncertainty against reaching a definition of ethnography. Rock (1979) further argues that the uncertainties within symbolic interactionism's ontology are not arbitrary, but reached through a series of arguments. The same can be said of reflexivity. It has become a marker of sophisticated ethnographic work. Reflexivity serves to keep both the spirit of ethnographic research and theoretic goals alive, by demonstrating one, non-prescriptive, way in which the production of knowledge through a research process can be mediated, whilst simultaneously critiquing the ability of research to produce knowledge about the social world. This indicates that ethnography is a maturing research discipline, which has accommodated and responded to criticism and changes in social thought.

⁸ Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) stress that their own text is not intended to act as a cookbook for 'doing ethnography.'

The crisis in contemporary ethnography.

The complexity and demands of ethnographic research have been seen to be a complicated business. It demands a variety of roles on the part of the researcher, from impression management in the field, to the good housekeeping of data management to individual flair in imagination and demeanour. The very concept of reflexivity prevents ethnography being seen in any simplistic, cut-and-dried manner, but appreciates the epistemological decisions implicit in all forms of social research. However, in a number of recent texts, Hammersley (1992, 2000) has judged contemporary ethnography to be in a state of crisis. He goes further to perceive not only a crisis, but a “*recurrent crisis*” (Hammersley 2000:15, emphasis added). Yet what is the nature of this crisis and how has it been sustained? What is, as Hammersley keeps asking, wrong with ethnography?

Hammersley (1992) finds the problem at the heart of ethnography. He argues it lacks a clear, common definition and the term ‘ethnography’ has become easily interchangeable with other words or activities. As a result, disparate versions of ethnography are practised across a variety of disciplines, which in turn has produced a wide variety of results, few of which seem connected or produce collective results or conclusions (Hammersley 1992, 1998).

Hammersley (1992, 1998, 2000) presents a consistently damning critique of the state of contemporary ethnography. Yet to what extent is the term ‘crisis’ warranted? If ethnography’s meaning is contested to the extent Hammersley implies, to what degree is it still meaningful to use the term ‘ethnography’? Does it suggest that there are arguments *against* forming a clear definition of ethnography?

Hammersley identifies that ethnography's definition is problematic, whereas reflexivity responds with an argument that holds that ethnography *needs* to be ambiguous. Hammersley (2000) has himself made extensive use of the concept of reflexivity, but holds his view that there is a recurrent crisis within ethnography.

What forms the basis of Hammersley's critique of ethnography? At what point in ethnography's history has this crisis occurred and, indeed, reoccurred? Hammersley's argument can be evaluated with reference to the key themes in the contemporary ethnographic methodological literature.

Images of ethnography in the contemporary methodological literature.

The only universal feature of the methodological literature is its diversity. Whilst debates have moved on from a positivism-naturalism dualism, the notion of reflexivity has forced contemporary ethnographers to examine every aspect of the ethnographic research process, which has resulted in a certain cynicism towards the research task. For example, Wolcott (1995) discusses the 'darker' aspects of field research, of voyeurism and 'faking it.' Atkinson (1990) describes the contrived and artful elements of research writing. Delamont (1992) entertains that respondents will lie and deceive, indeed, that the researcher will also whilst in the field. She also cites the research dangers of boredom, sexism and 'going native.' Hammersley (2000) discusses partisanship and that the allegiances of the researcher which, if political, will shape the direction of their ethnographies. Willis' (1977) study of his 'lads' has been cited as a celebration, if somewhat male-orientated, of working-class resistance (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Delamont 2000). Reflexivity has, in overview, moved ethnography beyond debates over quantitative versus qualitative, to create a

research approach far more assured in its stance. It is a new commitment that has raised ethnographic fieldwork to the status of a professional art (Wolcott 1995).

Such realisations provide little comfort for ethnographers such as Hammersley. The term reflexivity is able to defend the validity and reliability of ethnographic research products, yet Hammersley's vision is very much towards seeing what ethnography can collectively achieve and contribute. This uncovers the very heart of Hammersley's perception of a crisis. Hammersley's (1992) concerns lay with ethnography's concern with practice over theory. The crisis lies with the lack of ethnographic achievements in the development of sociological *theory*.

Hammersley (1992, 2000) is fully conscious others do not share his particular, 'partisan' picture of ethnography. He is concerned that the tendency remains to interpret ethnography merely as an atheoretical research tool – a method and not a distinct methodological paradigm (May 1993, Silverman 1993). It is a failure to penetrate or comment upon the ontological or theoretical thinking underpinning ethnographic work. In this sense, Hammersley (2000) would appear justified to have some justification in his perception of a 'recurrent crisis' in ethnography.

Hammersley's 'crisis' thesis is serious because it is focused at an epistemological and ontological level. Nevertheless, by appreciating the depth of Hammersley's commentary and analysis of ethnography's historical development and also contemporary themes in the methodological literature, three quintessential features at the heart of ethnographic work can be identified.

These three features form the understanding of ethnography used in the thesis. They are:

1. To make the familiar strange in order to challenge the perennial ethnographic question; what is happening here? This becomes particularly salient when researching local cultures.
2. To maintain a reflexive outlook *throughout* the research process: from the selection and use of research methods, to the analysis, writing and theoretical formulations.
3. The eclectic use of research methods to achieve research aims, albeit with an emphasis upon the study of face-to-face interaction, rather than a dogmatic or rigid adherence to qualitative strategies and techniques.

These three features are the basis of the thesis' understanding of ethnography. The following chapter now draws the relationship between theory and ethnography into sharper focus. The challenge is to see how ethnography (based on the above three features) can be used as a means to develop theoretical knowledge. As Hammersley (1992) notes, this is not an ethnographic goal supported by all, so hence the focus of the thesis now narrows. However, such a move continues to hold important implications for ethnography as a whole, for Agar (1996) notes, "the job of theoretically and epistemologically grounding ethnography is far from completed" (Agar 1996:xi).

CHAPTER 2. ETHNOGRAPHY, ANALYSIS AND THEORY.

The only way forward was to make a virtue out of the limitation: the boundaries of legitimate knowledge are endlessly challengeable [...]. There is no rationality without *uncertain* grounds, without *relativism* of authority. Relativism of authority does not establish the authority of relativism: it opens reason to new claimants.

(Rose 1997:129-30, original emphasis)

It is not worth it, as Thoreau said, to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.

(Geertz 1973:16)

A definition of ethnography defined solely as a collection of research techniques is ambiguous, even neutral and atheoretical and as a result, ethnography's contribution to knowledge production and a greater understanding of the social world remains unclear. The concept of reflexivity has enshrined Weber's (1948) argument on the impossibility of value-free research in popular and contemporary models of ethnography. However, the implication of this argument is that *all* research is inevitably prescriptive. Taken to the extremes, this could suggest that the research process and hence results are entirely contrived. This chapter moves to consider various ways of knowing, social theories and epistemological positions. The place, or status, of research inside these models varies, but the focus here remains upon approaches motivating a participation in *ethnographic* social research.

What is theory?

Craib (1992) offers a concise definition:

Social theory is, by definition, *general*; it claims some relevance to all the separate areas studied by sociologists.

(Craib 1992:4, original emphasis)

Craib (1992) argues that theorising has the scope to reach across and into all sub-disciplines of sociology. Craib unravels his definition of theory and suggests thinking theoretically is both performed by sociologists and grounded in everyday practice:

as soon as we start thinking about and trying to explain something which happens to us, over which we have no control, we are beginning to think theoretically.

(Craib 1992:6)

Craib's (1992) caveat is that theorising does not equate with 'common sense,' but rather that it involves the challenge to *explain* the events that affect us. It is this challenge, for Craib (1992), that involves thinking theoretically. He uses the analogy of the 'close' and not-so-close to demonstrate that explanations are not always readily obvious and therefore that theory can be formed in terms beyond our direct, or personal, experience. This is the point at which we learn something new about the social world and this, Craib (1992) suggests, is the central task of theorising.

Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) notion of reflexivity makes a similar distinction in recognising that the social world provides both the subject and context for social research. The question then becomes *how* the researcher may gain an insight into the social world. For Craib (1992), theorising inevitability involves propositions or speculations. Before the chapter moves to specifically concentrate on the role ethnography may play in theorising, Craib (1992) offers some generic guidelines as to how different approaches to theorising have balanced evidence with speculation.

Empirical sociology is one example of a theory which relies too heavily on its own propositions, to the detriment of the data collected. The approach centralises the collection of data to the extent that it has an unhealthy preoccupation with purely

technical debates (such as methodology). The assumption at the heart of this approach is that empirical research will ‘expose’ reality. Theory and method in this sense are self-referential, each serving to define and support the other. Craib (1992) finds little merit in such a stance. The real function of theory is more complex and involves *interpretation*:

theory must strive for internal coherence, for logical order, the world itself is often illogical or logical in a different way to the theory, which must be capable of allowing for this difference.

(Craib 1992:12)

Research into society produces the raw research material, but it is only with the help of theory (and our own experiential knowledge) that this material can be understood. Empirical sociology is therefore comparable to historian Ranke’s famous aphorism that the task of the historian was “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” [simply to show how it really was] (Carr 1987:9). Empirical sociology positions research as a vital component for the generation of theory, but in doing so reifies research to the point where it becomes certain, unquestionable fact.

The definition of reflexivity offered in the previous chapter prevents any such simple equation between research and knowledge. Therefore, what alternatives remain available for a mutually beneficial theory-method dialectic?

Craib (1992) finds a number of conditions, or ‘traps,’ where theoretical suppositions restrict the development of theory. These traps also have implications for the potential of social research to contribute to the development of theory. The first of these is the “crossword puzzle” trap, which draws on Kuhn’s (1970) work on paradigms. The analogy Craib strikes is between paradigms and crosswords. Theory

follows paradigmatic ideas around what the world *should* be like, so that theory merely fills in the squares on a crossword rather than recognising that “human activity is self-conscious and reflexive” (Craib 1992:11). The crossword puzzle trap restricts theory in the same way that empirical sociology restricts the use of research, both come to act as ‘clues’ in the completion of a pre-defined crossword.

The second ‘trap’ in which theoretical suppositions restrict the development of theory is an opposing, “brain-teaser” trap. This position over-emphasises second-order problems to the extent that is unable to form any kind of coherent paradigm or ‘crossword.’ Craib (1992) uses British analytical philosophy as an example. British analytical philosophy revolved around the issue of whether reasons for actions cause actions, which is a teleological statement in which the effect constitutes the cause. Like the dilemma of the chicken and the egg, the question is never satisfactorily resolved. Therefore, in terms of the achievement of theoretical knowledge, little progress is made. Similarly, Craib’s third ‘logic’ trap’ strives towards internal consistency and logical order to the extent that there is no room for qualification or exception in the theory’s model. As Geertz (1973) finds it impossible to capture the complexities of the social world in a function between X and Y coordinates, Craib also finds this model unsatisfactory. Both call for a more flexible account of causality.

The third and final trap outlined by Craib (1992) holds particular salience for ethnographic research. For Craib (1992), pure description does not constitute theory, as it only yields theory that is available by looking. The *explanation* of social phenomena cannot be gained simply by looking. The trap here is to mistake

description for theorising. The distinction for Craib is that theorising involves distance from the initial descriptive account in order to create new insight.

The four traps outlined by Craib (1992) could be perceived to act as restrictions on the process of theorising. Yet his position echoes many of the challenges Hammersley and Atkinson's notion of reflexivity creates for ethnography. For example, can systematic, internal logic and consistency exist alongside the argument that social life is messy and illogical? Can a general theory adequately represent the self-conscious individual social actor without being 'reductionist'? If we are to believe things exist beyond our own direct experiences (as Craib holds that we must), what is the point in conducting research that, by definition, studies what *is* observable? If we are dependent on criteria, such as rigour and logic, as validations for research, from where do we derive our notions of 'rigour' and 'logic'? indeed, at what point do we stop asking second-order questions before we join British analytical philosophy?!

The solution Craib (1992) offers is to qualify the four traps of theorising with four inevitable dimensions within all social theory: the cognitive, affective, reflective and normative. These four dimensions also serve to elaborate the caveats reflexivity places around modern ethnography. The cognitive dimension of theory describes theorising as a way of establishing knowledge about the social world. The affective places the experiences and feelings of the theorist (*vis-à-vis* researcher) into the type of theory they develop. The reflective element positions theory into the world it studies, as well as aiming to understand it. And, finally, the normative which recognises theory contains implicit/ explicit assumptions about how the world 'ought

to be,' or rather what have variously been called 'domain assumptions' (Gouldner 1970), paradigms (Kuhn 1970) and values (Weber 1948).

Craib's assessment of the task of theorising has served to demonstrate not only the difficulties of theorising, but also that the meaning of theory is itself contested. It seems theory, like ethnography, may not necessarily pursue the same directions or interests. The analogy Craib strikes is that decisions open some doors which closing others. The particular interest, or door to continue Craib's analogy, selected here relates to ethnographic research.

Theory and ethnographic research.

Archer (1996) clearly states social theory rests upon the identification, *a priori*, about what is 'the main constituent of social reality.' The focus of ethnography, which holds participant observation as a key means of investigating the social world, implicitly follows an argument that ninety per cent of the world's work is done at a face-to-face level (Goffman 1974). This approach is broadly defined as interpretive sociology and includes symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology. However, Archer (1996) finds dangers in positioning the individual centrally within a theory. One example she cites is methodological individualism's reified concept of self which produces an effect of 'upwards conflation' as it assumes each individual possesses a consistent, rational-action character (Archer 1996). Within interpretive sociology, there is no common conception of the individual. Whilst society is a less a pre-defined, *sui generis*, quantity, the tension resides over where society meets the individual in a causal relationship. Interpretive sociology still meets Craib's criterion for theory as it has

“some conception of cause” as there are rules and logic to these encounters (Craib 1992:21).

Reality, within a broadly interpretive perspective, is constantly defined and redefined by individual social actors themselves, as the term ethnomethodology (people’s methods) reflects. However, the point at which and level that society impinges upon social actors becomes the new ‘problem of order.’

To use Becker’s (1963) study as an example once again, the emphasis is upon the influence of experienced smokers upon the newcomers’ experiences of marihuana use. Becker (1963) applied interactionist principles to trace how the individual developed and ‘learned’ the pleasurable aspects of drug-use through interaction with other, more experienced, individuals. This included not just the physical act, but also the social support the peer group provides against the deviant label smoking marihuana is prescribed in society. Goffman, also commonly perceived to be a symbolic interactionist, also addresses the negative impact of social forms upon the individual.

Goffman (1961) argues institutions are instrumental if an understanding of the nature of the social world and interaction is to be reached:

The self arises not merely out of its possessor’s interactions with significant others, but also out of the arrangements that are evolved in an organisation for its members.

(Goffman 1961:138)

Goffman argues that collectivities of individuals such as in organisations or institutions create a further layer of obligations and structures that shape the

individual. Goffman's research therefore pursues the tension between the individual and, for example, 'total institutions' (Goffman 1961). Goffman (1961) studied the effects of mental hospital routines upon the patient's sense of self-worth. In this text, Goffman is cataloguing the processes through which the individual's sense of self is systematically stripped away by the everyday procedures of a mental hospital.

Becker and Goffman's positioning of the individual social actor vis-à-vis societal influences demonstrates that even with a focus upon face-to-face interaction, different analyses are commonplace among authors often considered to be exemplars of an approach. Ethnomethodology is a further approach that focuses upon the very moment, or instance, of interaction, with quite contrasting theoretical consequences:

the possibility of common understanding does not consist in demonstrated measures of shared knowledge of social structures, but consists instead and entirely in the enforceable character of actions in compliance with the expectancies of everyday life as a morality.

(Garfinkel 1967:53)

Ethnomethodology regresses the concept of the individual further than both Becker and Goffman. Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (for he coined the term originally) invests theory at a level of the individual's everyday, routine sense-making procedures. In these terms, social order is perpetuated by talk, or to use the philosopher Wittgenstein's term, language-in-use. The focus is hence on questions of meaning and less on the external mechanics of face-to-face interaction. The individual is less a strategic actor upon the social stage in this approach, than a cultural dope (Garfinkel 1967).

The very emphasis upon the 'ongoing' character of situations and the 'awesome' fragility of society (as achieved and re-created through every encounter) clashes with

the concept of reflexivity discussed in the previous chapter. The selection of the moment as a theoretical focus leads ethnomethodology to exclude historical and cultural influences on talk's organisation and, indeed, its origins. Ethnomethodology only incorporates them at the *instance* of interaction; they are felt through the moment and hence there is little scope to examine change or pre-givens feeding into the moment of interaction.

One of the strengths to ethnomethodology is its self-assurance in its own metaphysics (without suggesting that ethnomethodologists consider themselves to be in possession of any). Ethnomethodologists do not adopt an apologetic tone for having concentrated on micro-level interaction, such as Goffman does when he argues the really important theoretical concerns are with structure (Goffman 1974). To return to Craib's (1992) analogy that theorising opens some doors whilst closing others, ethnomethodologists slam the door behind them and are not at all interested in what may lie behind other doors. Whilst research is important for ethnomethodological theory, it is ultimately a separationist form of theorising.

These above few examples of interactional, if not interactionist, theorising have addressed the society-individual dualism, more than the theory-method dialectic as a means for producing knowledge about the social world. A similar emphasis upon the individual is present in ethnography, for as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest, "there is a sense in which all social researchers are participant observers" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:1). The chapter now returns to *ethnographic* processes of theorising, starting first with the role analysis plays within ethnographic research.

The role of analysis in ethnography.

Analysis is perceived by some to be “ where the ethnographic action is” (Agar 1996:xi). The status of analysis inside qualitative research is reflected in the recent publications explicitly devoted to qualitative data analysis,⁹ to the extent that it has even achieved a moment of consensus between ethnographers:

the ‘analysis’ of qualitative data is a process that continues throughout the research: it is not a separate, self-contained phase.
(Delamont 1992:151)

The process of analysis should not be seen as a distinct stage of research: rather, it is a reflexive activity that should inform data collection, writing, further data collection, and so forth [...] The research process, of which analysis is one aspect, is a cyclical one.
(Coffey and Atkinson 1996:6)

[Analysis is a] dynamic process [which] cannot be reduced to particular techniques or to stages, but rather a dynamic process is involved which links together [...] research strategy and research techniques as well as [...] research design, data collection and data analysis.
(Bryman and Burgess 1994:2)

The definition of analysis as a cyclical process understands that analysis serves to not only make sense out of qualitative data, but also recognises that ethnography is a *process*. It is not merely a matter of describing reality:

The idea that ethnographic accounts are simply descriptions of reality ‘as it is’ is just as misleading as the notion that historical accounts simply represent past events.
(Hammersley 1992:25)

In a similar vein, Burgess (1982a) argues that data represents the basis for an analysis, but does not dictate the *form* analysis may take. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) capture a balance between the insight data offers and the danger of reifying its insights. Their argument is that, in one sense, data can never be invalid as

⁹ For example, Dey 1993, Bryman and Burgess 1993, Miles and Huberman 1994 and Coffey and Atkinson 1996.

“authenticity is warranted by virtue of the ethnographer’s own first-hand attendance and participation,” yet at the same time “data must never be taken at face value” (Atkinson 1990:73, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:232). Lofland (1974) provides a series of caveats around the process, which in turn reveal more of the character of ethnographic analysis.

Lofland (1974) recommends avoiding the adoption of a chronological ‘and-then-they-do-this’ style that is excessively linear and adopts a story-telling format. Rather Lofland (1974) views analysis as a process of explication “to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order and patterns found among a set of participants” (Lofland 1974:7). Lofland (1974) here is advocating an internal logic, of coherency and clarity, in the construction of sociological accounts. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) find addressing the particular needs and focus of the research project provides guidance. Delamont (1992) again captures a spirit of enquiry, by describing analysis as “an intellectually engaging and creative exercise,” involving multiple practices, methods and possibilities (Delamont 1992:151). For example, in relation to *what* the ethnographer should seek to code, Delamont (1992) argues that you should, quite simply, code anything that interests you. The ethnographer’s capacity to retain the very freedom to be flexible and follow-up questions or problems that may later present themselves is a key element towards the achievement of a cyclical approach to analysis. Lofland (1974), however, is more cautious and warns against a haphazard vacillation between applying sociological concepts all over the place and a sound-byte use of ethnographic data. Ethnography, therefore, involves not simply the application of research methods but their use in a “thoughtful and principled way” (Delamont 1992:113).

The centrality of the researcher (for they are the research instrument *par excellence*) is also problematic in the analysis of ethnographic data (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The problem is one of placement, that is, *how* the author (for ethnography this usually implies a lone field researcher) features in the text and the danger of a false separation of the reader from the text. An example of this, whilst excessively stylistic, is Stronach and MacLure's (1997) separation and dialogue between Reader, Footnote and Text at the end of their postmodern analysis of education research ('undone'). Hammersley's (1999) position is that texts should not be discussed in the third person and that action should always take place in the first:

Everybody should be treated as operating in the realm of necessity, including the analyst him or herself.

(Hammersley 1999:2)

Coffey (1999), a past student of Delamont and Atkinson, specifically addresses the impact of the researcher upon every stage of the research process. She includes the researcher's physical characteristics, imagination, emotional state and the relationships they are able to build in the field. Wolcott (1995) presents a similar picture of the ethnographer. He advocates that the ethnographer should enter into a spirit of *joie de vivre*, which sees the ethnographer in subjective terms and recognises the impact of emotions such as tiredness, boredom and even sexual attraction (particularly if engaged in long-term fieldwork). Altork (1995), in a similar vein, critiques the detachment some authors write into their accounts. Citing a number of autobiographical writings by Bronislaw Malinowski and Paul Rabinow (two well-established anthropologists), she laments the negative responses their personal accounts have received from academics. In turn, she argues that this creates (and she describes herself as one such example) a hesitancy to discuss personal fieldwork

encounters. Indeed, there are echoes of Hochschild's (1983) notion of the emotionally managed heart, less in relation to airline hostesses, but to the ethnographic field researcher.

Coffey (1999) and Wolcott's (1995) understanding of the importance of the researcher's characteristics within the research process, like the chapter's opening quotation by Rose (1997), is positive rather than negative in tone. That is, the "relativism of authority" enables "a virtue [to be made] out of the limitation" as new sources of authority come to inform academic debates (Rose 1997:130, 129). The specific concern of the thesis is upon the authority of theory that is developed through ethnographic research. Whilst all ethnographic research involves *analysis*, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note that *theory* is only one ethnographic goal. Alternatives can include offering descriptive accounts, understandings of social setting and explanations, all of which are valuable ethnographic enterprises. However, the notion of reflexivity (as defined by Atkinson 1990) recognises that theorising and analysis permeate throughout every stage of the ethnographic research process. Two approaches to theorising through ethnography that dominate the ethnographic literature are now considered.

Theorising through ethnography: analytic induction and grounded theory.

Two of the best-known general strategies in relation to qualitative data analysis are analytic induction, as keenly advocated by Hammersley, and Glaser and Strauss' (1967) notion of grounded theory.

Analytic induction and grounded theory's approaches to theorising overlap to a considerable degree and ethnographic monographs rarely rigidly adhere to one or the other, but rather use a subtle blend of both. The principle of grounded theorising is that concepts are generated *inductively* from field research data:

Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. *Generating a theory involves a process of research.*

(Glaser and Strauss 1967:6, original emphasis)

Grounded theorising advocates an inductive process of theorising, in which a continuous process of analysis is vital. As the name suggests, grounded theorising involves the development of ideas from the ground level of the field, rather than imposed from above or defined at the outset of the research. Throughout every stage of the research process, the approach relies upon the data, not only for concepts, but also as a means of classification. Therefore, the terminology, if not exactly, is *derived from the field itself*. Data is grouped into codes and the codes are created through categories already established in the social setting under investigation. The properties associated with that code are repeatedly identified and clarified as the research progresses. On the basis of the developing characteristics of each code, the properties inside the code are refined and new codes developed, which are able to account to variations in the original code. A variety of codes, representing the categories derived from the field, and their various properties, are progressively developed, elaborated and refined.

The research process is the continuing development of initial 'sensitising concepts' into more concrete categories and ideas as they are compared to and continuously checked against the data and developed into more 'definitive concepts,' to use

Blumer's (1969) term. By using the terminology and analytic categories of the field, grounded theorising develops a series of categories and, more importantly, the relationships between those categories. The categories account for the patterns and regularities between other categories and in doing so become an exploratory proposition. The culmination of this process takes the form of a theoretical statement. If that statement is then found to capture the essences of another social group or setting, grounded theory of a higher order has been developed.

The distinctiveness of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) concept of grounded theorising is that the entire research process is geared towards the generation of theory. Their description of the 'discovery' of theory through this process is therefore something of a misnomer. The researcher less discovers it, than identifies and elaborates what is already there. The implicit idea in this form of theorising is that the data will 'speak for itself.' This assumption will be questioned later. However, many of the procedural principles of grounded theorising, particularly its use of a constant comparative method of analysis, are not so removed from another, oft-cited technique of theorising through ethnography. Whereas Glaser and Strauss' (1967) model works from the ground up, analytic induction reverses this by opening the research with specific questions and categories that have already been defined.

The 'process of research' analysis Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe is not unique to grounded theorising. The continuous interaction between describing, classifying and connecting, which is repeated over and over again, is shared by analytic induction. The key distinction between the approaches is analytic induction requires that research questions are pre-defined. Indeed, such questions can even appear as

formally stated hypotheses. Yet analytic induction's use of the constant comparative method requires that hypotheses are *not* set absolutely, but subject to continuous reformulation throughout the course of the research. Like grounded theorising, the concepts defined at the outset of the research interact and are reformulated in line with the emerging data set. Therefore both can be characterised as involving a “dialectical interaction between data collection and data analysis” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:205). As Bryman and Burgess (1994) identify, the terminology underpinning these processes of analysis is diverse, such as coding, classifying, creating typologies, memo writing, diagrams, themes, categories, yet they rely upon common principles of practical conduct.

Assessing the ethnographic ‘crisis.’

For Hammersley (1985), the paucity of theoretical cumulation through ethnography can be overcome – it is merely a case of knowing what to do and then doing it.

Although he is conscious that the model he favours, analytic induction, is only one among many, when Denzin (1997) (albeit operating from a postmodern perspective) suggests rather that we know it is impossible and hence we are not even attempting it, Hammersley (1997) in turn points out such a statement is self-contradictory.

Hammersley views academic contestation and debate as essential elements towards the furthering of sociological knowledge, his criticism of postmodernism is that it has not helped resolve the ambiguities that have resulted in a crisis within ethnography.

The discussion to this point has addressed both theorising and ethnography from a variety of angles and gradually narrowed its focus onto ethnographic approaches to theorising. Indeed, in outlining the complexities of the debate, the discussion has

supported Hammersley's case that there is a crisis in ethnography. This predicament has been abetted by reference largely to the methodological literature, which offers eternal prescription, but never practice. The methodological textbooks are context-free, offering tasty fieldwork vignettes, yet unable to ground their assertions in a fieldwork site. The texts themselves place careful caveats around their recommendations. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) express their intent was not to offer a methodological 'cookbook,' but rather they view their contribution to be a series of recommendations. Burgess (1984) follows a similar line, offering sources for how others have proceeded rather than an instant recipe for success.

The chapter now moves the discussion from the generic to specific types of theory generated through ethnographic research. The techniques used by the following four authors demonstrate how concepts and terms *derived from the field* have been used; from a total analogy to a simple tool for categorising a social setting. The intention is that some alternative forms of theorising are briefly discussed before the thesis moves to offer its own, detailed case study of one example of theory cumulation through ethnography.

Examples of theorising: Geertz, Wieder, Pryce and Goffman.

Geertz's approach to social research emphasises what practitioners actually *do*. This places the ethnographer firmly in the process of the theory and research construction, and, therefore, this holds implications for the knowledge ethnography produces. For Geertz (1973), social anthropology and ethnography is less about defining methods than understanding it as an investment of intellectual effort.

Ethnographic fieldwork forms a vehicle for Geertz to then conceptualise and form theory. The process itself involves a prolonged engagement in the field.

Ethnography, from Geertz's view, involves unravelling the multi-layered structures of inferences and implication and in the process they become theoretically "thick" over the course of the fieldwork:

understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity [...] It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity.

(Geertz 1973:14)

One particular example of Geertz's technique of analysis is his use of the cockfight as an analogy through which to understand Balinese culture. Geertz argues the cockfight is one of the most revealing features of Bali culture. The activity of cockfighting lays bare many of the structures, forms and interactions of Bali life:

No temple festival should be conducted until [a cockfight] is made. (If it is omitted, someone will inevitably fall into a trance and command with the voice of an angered spirit that the oversight be immediately corrected.) Collective responses to natural evils – illness, crop failure, volcanic eruptions – almost always involve them. And that famous holiday in Bali, 'The Day of Silence' (*Njepi*), when everyone sits silent and immobile all day long in order to avoid contact with a sudden influx of demons chased momentarily out of hell, is preceded by large-scale cockfights [...] in almost every village on the island.

(Geertz 1973:420)

However, Geertz (1973) remains wary of 'thin' descriptions that offer only simplistic equations of masculinity with the cockfight:

The deep psychological identification of Balinese men with their cocks is unmistakable [...] the fact that they are masculine symbols par excellence is about as indubitable, and to the Balinese about as evident, as the fact that water runs downhill.

(Geertz 1973:417-8)

Geertz's (1973) argument is that, through the process of research and analysis, constructions are made upon other people's constructions and to a certain extent ethnography celebrates this overlapping multiplicity. The analogy of the cockfight therefore captures many levels of meaning:

The cockfight is 'really real' only to the cocks – it does not kill anyone, castrate anyone, reduce anyone to animal status, alter the hierarchy relations among people, or refashion the hierarchy; it does not even redistribute income in any significant way. What it does is what, for other people with other temperaments and other conventions, *Lear* and *Crime and Punishment* do; it catches up these themes – death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence, chance – and, ordering them into an encompassing structure, presents them in such a way as to throw into relief a particular view of their essential nature.

(Geertz 1973:443)

The danger in ethnography and anthropology's potential to identify many layers of understanding is that explication becomes an end in itself, at very worse, a process of explicating explications. Geertz (1973) holds analysis as vital in making sense of such complexity; sorting out the structures of signification, finding out what is and is not significant. Geertz (1972) analogises the researcher to, not a cipher clerk, but a literary critic who determines the social import of structures of signification. Geertz (1973) therefore recognises that research is not (and can never be) a perfect representation of the given object of study and hence he avoids making a naïve, or reified claim to objectivity.

Geertz's (1973) demonstrates his idea of thick description through the cockfight. The analogy is an interpretation, as all anthropological and ethnographic writings are, which progresses to second or third-order theory work. Whilst he derives his analogy from a description of Balinese cockfights, the very technique of doing makes it a persuasive technique to convince the author of the authenticity of his account. The technique is almost literal (references to Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky notwithstanding!), for Geertz finds literature and anthropological writing possess similar, fictional characteristics. The picture Geertz presents is not of *one* theory through an ethnographic process, but rather *theories*.

A contrasting method of theoretical elaboration through research is provided by Wieder (1974). Wieder (1974) uses a terminology derived from his research setting to form his basic analytic concepts. Wieder (1974) researched an American prison and, in particular, analysed the inmates' notion of 'telling the code.' This concept was derived from the participants' own terminology is analytical, yet this was an analytical move in that it progressed beyond the inmates employment of 'telling the code' to use the code itself as a tool of description and explanation.

Wieder's (1974) account explains that inmates used 'telling the code' and 'following the code' as a means to justify their behaviour in certain situations. Wieder (1974) therefore used the code to interpret and understand the interaction and relationships between inmates and their prison guards. The complete lack of co-operation by inmates towards guards, for example in terms of disclosing information that could have been beneficial to both parties, was explained when the ethics of not 'snitching' or co-operating with the guards were explicated in relation to the code.

Wieder (1974) is an example of using a term derived from the fieldwork and developing it into a sociological tool of analysis. This can be contrasted with Pryce (1979). Pryce (1979) also drew concepts from the field, but used them as classificatory and descriptive tools, rather than a conceptual ones. Pryce (1979) used participants' own terminology in addition to a more formal, sociological language to create six categories, or typologies, to describe different characters in the Afro-Caribbean community in the St. Paul's area of Bristol. For example, he describes the older, more conformist and middle-class orientated people as 'the Saints' and the younger, socially active and less law-abiding participants as 'teenyboppers.' The

terms, derived from the terminology of the participants themselves, become a means to classify the groups within the community, their characteristics and their relationships with one another. This is in contrast to Wieder's (1974) method, which explained the behaviour of those social groups under study.

The three examples of Geertz, Wieder and Pryce demonstrate different analytic uses of concepts that have been derived from the data. Wieder (1974) develops 'the code' into an explanatory concept. The concept remains derived from the data, but Wieder's (1974) sociological application distances 'the code' from its original connotations in the field. A final variant on concept use is metaphors. Metaphors are not necessarily drawn directly from the terminology of participants in the field, but they take on an analytic role when they become a means of extrapolating the data.¹⁰ A famous example is Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model.

Goffman (1959) conceptualised social interaction as analogous to a drama on a stage.

The social actors are seen as performers:

When one individual enters the presence of others, he [sic] will want to discover the facts of the situation. [...] Full information of this order is rarely available; in its absence, the individual tends to employ substitutes – cues, tests, hints, expressive gestures, status symbols, etc. – as predictive devices. In short [...] appearances must be relied upon in its stead.

(Goffman 1996[1959]:21)

The irony of the drama metaphor is that “paradoxically, the more the individual is concerned with the reality that is not available to perception, the more must he [sic] concentrate his attention on *appearances*” (Goffman 1996[1959]:21, emphasis added)

10 As opposed to the use of metaphor's as a macro, theoretical framework (such as functionalism's organic analogy).

Goffman (1959) used the metaphor of a drama as an analytic concept to understand and interpret the actions and behaviour of social actors. Goffman's use of the concept of interaction as drama, unlike Wieder (1974) and Pryce (1979), was not supplied directly from the terminology of the participants, although Goffman (1959) did engage in direct observation and fieldwork contact on a remote Scottish island community.¹¹ Therefore Goffman's application of his ethnographic observations contains both the finely nuances of intimately observed social action, but also renders his application of fieldwork data invisible. Goffman (1959) confesses:

that this attempt to press a mere analogy so far was in part a rhetoric and a maneuver [...] This report is not concerned with aspects of theater that creep into everyday life. It is concerned with the *structure* of social encounters [...] [and] the maintenance of a single *definition of the situation*, this definition having to be expressed, and this expression sustained in the face of a multitude of potential disruptions.

(Goffman 1996[1959]:24, 25, emphasis added)

Goffman's use of metaphor is therefore merely an analytic tool. The descriptions he offers are of the social situations (his very concern lies with moments of interaction), yet he rarely makes direct reference to ethnographic data. It is detailed observational work in which the fieldwork processes have disappeared. Indeed, Goffman presents a very different picture of analysis than either grounded theorising or analytic induction.

Collectively, these authors all rely upon the research techniques that comfortably fit underneath the umbrella term of ethnography, yet how they use that data to progress their analysis is radically different. The appropriate transition from field data, to analysis and then to conceptual and theoretical representations is far from agreed and a point on which Geertz (1973) is dissatisfied:

¹¹ The first edition of *Presentation of Self* was published by the University of Edinburgh press in 1956, but contains only minor differences.

For a field of study which, however timidly (though I, myself, am not timid about the matter at all), asserts itself to be a science, this just will not do [...] We are reduced to insinuating theories because we lack the power to state them.

(Geertz 1973:24)

Geertz (1973) argues it is not possible to simply transpose ethnographic knowledge from the micro to the macro. The focus of the thesis now turns to challenge this claim, not in the abstract, nor through detailing the theoretical principles of an approach, but through a detailed examination of one instance of theory cumulation through ethnography. The merits of one specific theory, that of differentiation-polarisation theory, are now considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3. THE CASE FOR HARGREAVES, LACEY AND BALL.

As time goes by, theories do not become better, by which I mean broader in scope and more economical in content, either as a result of careful testing or as a result of subsuming earlier theories. Theories simply 'lie around' in the field, relatively vague and relatively untested.

(Hargreaves 1981:10)

The chapter considers the specific case of differentiation-polarisation theory and evaluates it as an example of theory generated through ethnographic research.

Differentiation-polarisation theory developed across three research monographs (Hargreaves 1967, Lacey 1970 and Ball 1981). Two were part of the same research project and the third deliberately continued their work. The chapter introduces each study, its fieldwork, findings and conclusions. The chapter then moves to consider the links between the three, the interplay between theory and method in the generation of differentiation-polarisation theory and, finally, whether they collectively offer a model for the development of theory through ethnography.

Agar (1996) argues sociologists now work in a "day of literature of truly unmanageable proportions" (Agar 1996:x). Agar (1996) referred particularly to the explosion of methodological texts appearing since his own first edition of *The Professional Stranger* (Agar 1996 [1980]). In the light of Agar's observation, it would be easy to assume the secondary literature has drawn out several examples of theoretical qualitative research work for discussion. However, examples of research with explicitly theoretical outcomes or agendas are rare. Whilst this is not to suggest that theory is absent or has

failed to develop at all¹², rather that differentiation-polarisation theory is unique in several ways.

Differentiation-polarisation theory developed across a series of closely connected research monographs –the theory derives from the three collectively. Their connection is not coincidental. Hargreaves and Lacey were both researchers on a project based in Manchester University's Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology between 1962-6, directed by Professors Gluckman and Worsley. Ball links to the project through Lacey, when the latter was at Sussex University and supervised the doctoral research upon which Ball (1981) is based. The three published monographs by Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball have been cited as landmark studies (Abraham 1989, Burgess 1984, Hammersley 1985, 1992, Delamont 1984, 1992) and are now considered in turn.

Lacey (1970).

Lacey was the first to begin fieldwork, and his period of data collection ran from October 1962 until 1966. Lacey described the Manchester Project sought to fill a perceived a gap in the Sociology of Education which failed to see “the school itself as a social system” (Lacey 1970:xiii). Lacey used a case study approach in order to capture the school as a unit in its own right, and he selected a boys' grammar in the northern industrial town of 'Hightown.'

Hightown was the only boys' grammar school in the local education authority, and Lacey set an additional research agenda to position the school within the changing

¹² Labelling theory is one example of an influential micro-orientated theory.

needs of the community by analysing the school's role in the town over the last fifty years. Community research was an interest shared by other members within the Manchester Project team, for example Frankenberg (who with Valdo Pons had written the project's original proposal) was an established researcher in the area of community studies (Frankenberg 1966, 1990). A far more informal influence was Frankenberg's role as Lacey's doctoral supervisor, as *Hightown Grammar* was the published version of Lacey's thesis.

Lacey (1970) argued the project developed existing research in the Sociology of Education by seeking "to explain the disappointing performance of working-class boys in grammar schools since the 1944 Education Act¹³" (Lacey 1970:xi-xii). He later argued that social class was analogous to 'chips with everything' – sociologists applied class to everything (Lacey and Ball 1979). Atkinson *et al* (1993) similarly identified British social anthropology far more reliant upon social class as an analytic category than its American counterpart. The novelty of the project's application of class was the level at which it sought to explore class inequalities. Lacey designed his methodology to access and explore interactional behaviour within the system of the school. He included ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, unstructured interviews, self-administered questionnaires and school and local education authority (LEA) office records. The priority among all of these, he argued, was his own active participation inside the school.

13 The 1944 Act introduced the tripartite system of Secondary Grammar, Secondary Technical and Secondary Modern schools.

Lacey accessed the school in February 1963, under “the good offices” of the Chief Education Officer. Lacey argued negotiations were “made smooth by the decision to include teaching as an essential part of the field work” (Lacey 1970:xiii). Lacey’s objective in taking a teaching role was underpinned by the aim to become a critical insider. Prior to taking up his formal teaching responsibilities, he spent the first two months learning his way around, meeting with and talking to staff and pupils and explaining his presence in school, as he describes, moving from a stranger to a familiar figure in the school. During these two months, he observed at least one lesson by each of Hightown’s teaching staff and used the time as an important period of conceptual development. That is, he located “a number of strategic areas that would enable me to gain a clear picture of the processes taking place within the school” (Lacey 1970:xiv). The focusing and identification of these areas was crucial for the rest of the study, as it defined Lacey’s future time and role at Hightown. His role of a teacher in Hightown was important, “since my plans had to allow for long-term teaching commitments” (Ibid.). Lacey, with help of a senior master, designed a teaching timetable involving contact with 1st, 4th and 6th year groups. Contact included teaching and observing these groups for twelve periods a week each. The rest of Lacey’s timetable (eleven periods a week and therefore more than the standard allocation of non-teaching time for staff) Lacey used for marking, writing notes, working through school records, collecting questionnaire material and talking to staff. Lacey also cultivated diverse social relationships at Hightown beyond his formal contact in classroom observation and teaching:

During the field work period I attempted to immerse myself in the school and its activities. I helped to run a cricket team and went on several school trips. I also lived within 300 yards of the school during (and since) the research.

(Lacey 1970:xiv-v)

Lacey used his teaching timetable and his in informal school activities to collect data over eighteen months of intensive fieldwork. He conducted two 'questionnaire studies' in the first term of the school year, the first a 'panel study' of the 1st Year (which included "questions on sociometric choice, value orientations and career aspirations") and the second on the 5th Year after their GCE 'O' level exams, which collected information on family background, school career and peer group affiliation (Lacey 1970:xiv).¹⁴

Lacey's study of Hightown Grammar was informed by "an historical level" analysis of the Hightown community (Lacey 1970:xv). Lacey conducted a specific case study of a school, but this was writ large by changes within the education system and the response effected within the community. The introduction of the tripartite system, Lacey argued, had served to position Hightown Grammar as a key site of class competition. In this system, "parents and their children become centrally concerned with examination success as the key to life chance allocation (Lacey 1982:171). The anticipatory socialisation began in the 'hierarchy of junior schools' and continued at Hightown Grammar:

The process of selection for the grammar school, from a hierarchy of junior schools, ensures that the intake to the grammar school consists of boys who have been used to playing the 'best pupil' role in their junior schools and who have thought themselves as grammar school pupils.

(Lacey 1970:xv)

14 The two questionnaires were administered during the fieldwork (1962-6) and again when Lacey was writing-up (1970).

Pupils and teachers at Hightown Grammar represented the cream of the community and this was reflected in a school system dominated by academic social values.

Exposure to Hightown Grammar's academic ethos:

entails the differentiation of the student body in terms of the dominant school values and the subsequent formation of two distinct student sub-cultures: one pro-school and the other, called the anti-group sub-culture, reacting against the dominant school values (and the pro-school groupings). The development of these opposed sub-cultures is termed 'polarisation' and the process is studied over a four-year period, as the cohort under investigation moves through the school. [...] These opposed sub-cultures [...] affect attitudes to academic work and patterns of behaviour.

(Lacey 1970:xv)

Lacey derives this conclusion directly from the case study. The "model constructed [...] provides an explanation of the case study material. In the process of developing the model, some fifty or sixty detailed case histories were examined" (Lacey 1970:190). The school processes central to the differentiation and polarisation of pupils are the inter-personal pupil relationships within one stream; the twinned but opposed pressures towards academic achievement and anti-academic activity; and the career of teaching staff (as experienced or newly-qualified, or as he terms, 'hard' and 'soft').

Across all of these:

Staff-student relationships are pictured as the grinding interface between the two major sub-systems within the school. The leeway for experiment and change within the present system is seen to be extremely limited unless important structural changes are made in the role and career structure of the teacher.

(Lacey 1970:xvi)

The organisation of the school sets a restricted context that defines and moulds social relations:

the large total number of pupils, the rapid succession of classes, the asymmetry of the classroom situation, the necessity for adequate classroom control and the necessity to maintain the role distance in the teacher-pupil relationship – impinge directly on the classroom situation and radically affect the sort of relationship a teacher can have with an individual pupil. *The individual pupil is judged, above all, on his classroom performance* (academic and behaviour). Those pupils who, in the past, have produced bad work or been badly behaved soon develop a reputation for these things which carries over into future events and other spheres. Such a reputation [...] can be an important determinant of the enthusiasm and motivation which pupils bring to future tasks, and hence of the resulting performance.

(Lacey 1970:177, my emphasis)

Teachers ranked pupils on a criterion of a pupil's academic work *and* their behaviour (and that pupils' behaviour was found to be consistent):

The effect was for different pupils to receive very different selections of rewards, qualifications, punishments and rebukes. Over time these treatments became part of the expectations of the classroom [...] teacher behaviour, conditioned by the reputation of the pupil, is one of the central factors producing differentiation

(Lacey 1982:172, 178)

The denial of the expected flow of rewards had a profound impact upon pupils' self image and future school career:

in order to achieve a stable performance, a pupil requires a flow of short-term gratifications (received through his activities within the school) which are in line with the expectations built up during his past performances [...] The school is regarded as a competitive arena in which the flow of rewards is limited [...] problems stemmed from the more intense competition of the E [top] stream and the demoralisation which followed from inability to secure the expected flow of short-term gratifications to which they had become accustomed.

(Lacey 1970:148, 149, 150)

The competition was influenced by the distribution of "cultural resources," which influenced "the parents' ability to understand and manipulate an 'academic' or 'school' culture. An important indicator of this is their educational background"

(Lacey 1970:149, 126). To have lost in the schooling system also marked the loss of later opportunities:

I use the term *defeat* advisedly, because in a very real sense the families described here played for high stakes and lost. They were defeated by the system and the achievement of their competitors.

(Lacey 1970:152, original emphasis)

Lacey's study concludes that social class is vital to an understanding of the schooling experience at Hightown. Rather than offering a meritocratic model, through the process of schooling, social class inequalities are maintained and recreated. This process includes the internal organisation of the school into streams, the application of an academic (rather than practical) syllabus and an orientation toward examinations. The result is that Hightown "inevitably retained the function of stratifying pupils for the labour market" (Lacey 1982:179). The changes brought about with the 1944 Education Act were not sufficient, as "schools could not compensate for society," rather the "old constraints re-emerged in new forms and new freedoms were not available for all" (Lacey 1982:179, 185). The school had emerged as a new, key site for competition reified, less for the celebration of knowledge or education for education's sake, than the value ascribed to school qualifications.

Lacey places some caveats around his conclusions. He couches the differentiation-polarisation thesis carefully; as a particular conclusion from a particular organisation and context. The strength of the conclusion as a theoretic proposition, at that point, stands restricted.

Hargreaves (1967).

The Manchester Project examined the different structures of the tripartite system.

Lacey studied students passing the eleven-plus examination and moving to a grammar, Hargreaves, in contrast, studied those who failed moving to a secondary modern school. (The third type of school, the technical school, was rare in comparison).

Hargreaves conducted a case study of an all-boys' school, 'Lumley' Secondary Modern. He retained the Manchester Project's focus upon social relations and held the school up as a social system which "includes many basic social processes" (Hargreaves 1967:ix):

The aim of the study is to describe the structure and unintended consequences of selected aspects of human behaviour and organization in the school. It is through the examination of the conflicts and deleterious effects of human action and school organization that our understanding of the social system of the school can be advanced.

(Hargreaves 1967:x)

Hargreaves' approach, like Lacey's was both exploratory (the interactional processes of a secondary modern school) and critical (in his concern to challenge the meritocratic ideal as operationalised by the organisation of the school). He chose to take on a teaching role within the school, having been a teacher himself in the past, arguing that this would allow him to access and observe the forms of interaction demanded by his research objectives:

the researcher entered the school as a participant-observer, armed with his own training and teaching experience and with the intention of examining the behaviour and attitudes of boys in school and their relationships with the teachers and with one another.

(Hargreaves 1967:ix)

Hargreaves taught at Lumley for one year, and attended school every day for the first two terms. The main focus of the study was the final year cohort, in the 4th Year, and aged fourteen to fifteen (the final compulsory year of schooling was only later raised to sixteen). Hargreaves argued the “assumption is that these fourth year boys represent a crystallization of the values inculcated by the school and an end-product of the educative process” (Hargreaves 1967:x-xi). The Lumley schooling experience, under this logic, would be epitomised by this cohort.

Hargreaves subsequently designed his fieldwork to maximise his contact with the group. Across the year, he personally taught the whole of this year cohort, although his teaching also included other years. In addition, he observed at least one lesson by all of the Lumley teaching staff, conducted questionnaires and interviews and worked from a general policy that used “every available opportunity for informal discussion” with pupils (Hargreaves 1967:ix).

The strong conceptual and methodological parallels between Hargreaves and Lacey’s studies extend to their findings. Hargreaves’ (1967) found an academic ethos also existed within the Lumley system, which permeated social relations beyond purely academic ability. Lumley structured pupils into a streaming system and Hargreaves found “membership of a high stream is a function not simply of ability but of positive orientation to academic values, the reverse being true of low streams” (Hargreaves 1967:191). Hargreaves (1967) offered an account of how pupils, through the experience of schooling at Lumley, came to form two oppositional sub-cultures – conformist (towards the school ethos) and non-conformist. The streaming organisation of the school exacerbated pupils’ segregation, promoting a polarisation

of attitudes. For example, Hargreaves (1967) described how the top two sets were timetabled together for games, woodwork and metalwork. The bottom two sets were paired for the same periods, the point was that there were “never upper and lower streams together” (Hargreaves 1967:170). Timetable organisation constrained year cohort interaction:

[the] concentration of boys with similar orientations [...] tends to insulate members of different streams from interaction and from mutual influence. Individuals become increasingly exposed to their own subculture and increasingly insulated from the values of the other. All these mutually reinforcing factors thus lead, by the fourth year, to a polarisation of values.
(Hargreaves 1967:170)

The differentiation of pupils at Lumley on the basis of academic ability had a profound effect:

In the low streams, boys are deprived of status in that they are *double failures* by their lack of ability or motivation to obtain entry to a Grammar School or to a high stream in the Modern School. The school [...] accentuates this state of failure and deprivation. The boys have achieved virtually nothing. For boys in low streams, conformity to teacher expectations gives little status [...] they are unable [to gain] any sense of equality of worth in the eyes of the school.
(Hargreaves 1967:169, original emphasis)

Within Lumley pupils’ school careers were structurally divided in terms of the successful and the non-achievers. The most marked division on these grounds was entrance for examination. Hargreaves’ description of this division powerfully demonstrates the dramatic impact this has for pupils:

The children are in fact divided into sheep and goats: those who take the examinations and those who do not.
(Hargreaves 1967:184)

Hargreaves also took the care to understand the wider vested interests of the school, which reached into the procedure for selecting pupils for examination:

Lumley could not achieve a high rank in the 'league table' unless boys whose chances of success in the examination were small were excluded from entry. In this way the school could maintain an apparently good academic record by depriving low stream pupils of the opportunity to enter for an external examination.

(Hargreaves 1967:185)

Once these decisions were reached, little opportunity was available within a "streaming system [which] is self-validating in that it to some extent *manufactures* the differences on which it is justified by teachers" (Hargreaves 1967:190, original emphasis). The division of pupils inside the internal organisation of the school became increasingly marked and extended into the social relations *between* different streams:

Barriers to communication are likely to lead to the formation of stereotypes, especially where a status-differential is involved; and as long as the barriers remain, the hostile attitudes will persist and perhaps be reinforced. By the fourth year the values and attitudes of members of upper and lower streams have diverged, and there is evidence of deep hostility between the A and the D streams. The barriers existing between the upper and lower halves reinforce the perceived differences and elevate them into irreconcilable and totally opposed stereotypes.

(Hargreaves 1967:171)

The impact of these stereotypes re-negotiates previous social networks and dictate future ones:

It is tragic that often an A stream boy was not on speaking terms with a D stream boy, even though both may have been pupils in the same class in Junior School and both may live in the same street.

(Hargreaves 1967:184)

Hargreaves' fieldwork allowed him to demonstrate the power and sophistication of the differentiation-polarisation thesis with an analysis of an apparently everyday classroom situation:

The academically orientated boys in these [lower stream] forms are regarded by the teachers as conformists, whereas on the peer group level they are the deviants; and the 'difficult' boys whom the teacher regards as non-conformists are in fact the high status conformists on the peer group level. [...] The result is that when the teacher publicly praises the low status boy for his good work, he

is in fact stressing the deviance of such boys from the group norm, and is thus reinforcing the anti-academic norms he seeks to disrupt.

(Hargreaves 1967:188)

Hargreaves' analysis challenged the immediately obvious interpretation of the situation to reveal the wider tensions in play. Internal classroom situations also extended to shape informal activities. Hargreaves described the case of one pupil and an instance where their anti-school attitude prevented his participation in extra-curricula sporting activities, even when he had a personal interest and aptitude. In this instance, Hargreaves had discovered the pupil, Derek, was a keen swimmer and had suggested Derek might join the school's swim team. He met with the categorical response "I wouldn't swim for this bloody school" (Hargreaves 1967:188). Derek's example showed participation required more than ability, and this extended into sporting and academic contexts:

Membership of a high stream is a function not simply of ability but of positive orientation to academic values, the reverse being true of low streams.

(Hargreaves 1967:191)

Derek refused to participate in an activity associated with loyalty to the school.

Hargreaves concluded that not only did their stream profoundly shape a pupils' school career, but also the internal organisation of the school demanded more than academic ability alone. Hargreaves' analysis therefore allowed him to reach a far deeper conclusion than simply that Lumley had failed to meet the meritocratic objectives of the 1944 Education Act. Hargreaves' analysis revealed that the process of differentiation was not immediately obvious and had an impact beyond examinations results. He had demonstrated that this level of understanding of the school system in operation was only possible through the detailed comparison of different streams.

Hargreaves' and Lacey's mutual finding of differentiation-polarisation in two different school systems supports the argument that schools profoundly shape the educational experience and achievement of pupils. Hargreaves, particularly, emphasises differentiation-polarisation as a product of internal school processes, perhaps to the displacement of social class as a variable:

We feel that even in an exclusively working class comprehensive school subcultural differentiation will take place unless preventive measures are taken. [...] We suggest that discussions of the social class composition of schools often exaggerate the influence of social class at the expense of other variables.
(Hargreaves 1967:220)

Hargreaves and Lacey, in their concluding recommendations, advocated change in the internal organisation of schools. Both were conscious that the move towards comprehensivisation in England and Wales could constitute a profound re-modelling of the schooling system. Comprehensivisation offered the elimination of the eleven-plus examination in state education and the abolition of the organisation of pupils into three school 'types,' in favour of the allocation of pupils to schools on the basis of geographic proximity. In principle, schools would come to represent a spectrum of abilities. The pre-school stigma of 'achiever' or 'failure,' Lacey (1970) and Hargreaves (1967) identified with the eleven-plus examination at school transfer, would be eradicated.

The key question would then become, with the abolishment of pupil differentiation through streaming or setting pupils, would comprehensive schools no longer be characterised by internal differentiation? How would informal and formal social relations be affected? Can a comprehensive system effect a substantial change, or does an egalitarian education demand a more aggressive policy? That is, can a school be undifferentiated when, as Hargreaves reminds us, one of the central functions of

the school is the certification of academic attainment? Hargreaves and Lacey concluded their studies with the prediction that comprehensives would be subject to the same tensions (both inside and outside the school) their studies identified. The core questions would remain the same, such as:

the disappointing performance of working-class boys in grammar schools since the 1944 Education Act. I do so in the belief that to understand this problem within the grammar school is to assist in solving the problem of the working-class pupil within the comprehensive system which is likely to replace the tripartite system. The insight gained in this study should not be thought inapplicable to the new comprehensive system. The shape and character of the processes described in Hightown Grammar School are in part the result of pressures emanating from society. These same pressures will affect the comprehensive school. While the comprehensive system may provide an organisational framework more likely to achieve equal educational opportunity for all sections of the community, it will not happen automatically.

(Lacey 1970:xi-xii)

Ball (1981).

Ball (1981) continued Hargreaves and Lacey's research into selection, socialisation and change in the context of one comprehensive school. Ball's case study of 'Beachside' comprehensive retained Lacey and Hargreaves' scepticism towards the challenge faced by comprehensives inheriting the legacy of the tripartite system. Lacey directed linked Ball with the Manchester Project in a detailed introduction, in the book itself (Ball 1981). Lacey found Ball made "use of the findings and conceptual frameworks of these earlier studies [...] to 'fine tune' his investigation" (Ball 1981:xiii). Ball (1981) refers to the 'guidance' of Lacey and Hargreaves' work, but argues his overall intention was to "do more than merely repeat their work on grammar and secondary modern schools in the new context of comprehensive education" (Ball 1981:xvi). His own study, he argued, focused "upon the emergent nature of social interaction as well as the playing out of social structural and cultural forces in the school" (Ball 1981:xv).

Ball synthesised Hargreaves and Lacey's approaches by examining the school system on a variety of analytic levels. The first, and most general of these, was to see if the differentiation-polarisation thesis held within a new comprehensive. Second, the impact of the internal organisation of the school upon pupils' school careers. Finally, the social actors' own management (Ball's term) of their everyday life in school. Ball drew these concerns together with the aim "to situate both the pupils' careers and the innovation process in a context of structural constraints and social determinants" (Ball 1981:xvi). He described his theoretical approach as eclectic:

The book employs a combination of interactionist and structuralist perspectives to explore and analyse first the definition and social construction of pupil's identities and their school careers, and second the social process of educational innovation.

(Ball 1981:xv)

Ball's research was thematically led, but the context was one of change. His agenda therefore, almost out of necessity, rejected prescription in favour of understanding, description and analysis.

Ball began, as Lacey had done, with a period of general observation in the field. Guided by the classic interactionist question, 'what is going on here?' (Silverman 1970), Ball began "to locate a number of strategic areas that would enable me to gain a clear picture of the processes taking place within the school" (Ball 1981:xviii). The focus of the study narrowed, from a general school acquaintance, to focus on specific cohorts, forms and pupils and teachers.

Ball's (1981) fieldwork at Beachside ran from the Autumn Term of 1973 to early in 1976 and throughout he used a variety of research strategies and techniques. He

observed lessons, taught as a supply teacher, interviewed pupils and teachers, conducted several small-scale questionnaires (including sociomatrices) and studied official school records and registers. Additionally, he spent time in Beachside's community but added that this was limited, as (unlike Lacey) he did not live in the immediate proximity. Ball followed the pattern laid down by Lacey and Hargreaves and taught at Beachside. He worked as a supply teacher, and varied the amount of time he formally taught. In the first year of the fieldwork, Ball was in the school for three days a week and had four periods of teaching timetabled per week. For the second year, he reduced his teaching to three periods a week but increased his attendance to four days. The third year involved occasional visits to the school. Seeking to become a critical insider in the school, Ball also went on a school trip, invigilated exams, took registration periods for absent teachers and played in a staff vs. pupils cricket match.

The timing of Ball's fieldwork at Beachside caught the school adjusting and accommodating to comprehensivisation, enabling him to trace how comprehensivisation had filtered through from the LEA to Beachside's headteacher and staff. Ball considered the process of implementation itself was worthy of study alone, as "research has tended to neglect the social context of innovation, and the processes of interpretation and understanding on the part of the actors involved in doing the changing" (Ball 1981:287).

Ball revealed Beachside's move towards comprehensivisation had relied not only upon philosophic and pedagogic rationales, but also the motivation and enthusiasm of staff. Not all of the staff had been equally committed to the comprehensive ideal,

indeed, initially some staff believed mixed-ability teaching (a central aspect of one version of comprehensivisation) to be a practical impossibility. The 'careful pioneering' of change by the English department had been critical in establishing the merit of a comprehensive system at Beachside. Ball described how the head of the English department had played a critical role by using his own department to demonstrate that not only was mixed-ability teaching achievable, but that staff's concerns for the maintenance of discipline and academic standards were not immediately justified. The comprehensivisation ethic, Ball argued, had won only after it had demonstrated traditional indicators of success would not be threatened.

Beachside became a comprehensive in name, but Ball's analysis revealed that the organisation of the school itself retained many characteristics of the previous system. Beachside did not change to teach universally in mixed-ability groups and whilst mixed-ability teaching is a central aspect of only one version of comprehensive education, Ball (1981) came to criticise Beachside's own system of internally stratifying its pupils. Beachside's intake (1st) year contained ten parallel, mixed-ability forms plus two remedial forms whilst Years 2 and 3 were divided into three 'bands' on the basis of academic ability. It was the banding system itself that recreated the same inequalities Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) identified at Hightown and Lumley:

It is apparent from the analysis and description of the banding system that there is little evidence of the aims and objectives of any of the ideological models of comprehensive education [...] being achieved to any significant degree at Beachside [...] [banding] entailed a separation of school-career experiences for pupils; differences in the pupils' experiences of schooling began at once in the first year, and may be viewed in the long term as being related directly to the distribution of occupational opportunity and future life chances.

(Ball 1981:280, 281)

The comprehensive system at Beachside, through the banding system, recreated the “subtle modes of ascription” maintaining the differentiation-polarisation Lacey and Hargreaves had identified (Sharpe and Green 1976, quoted in Ball 1981:285):

the streamed comprehensive school does produce an unstable, polarised social structure amongst its pupils. [...] As far as the egalitarian ideology of comprehensive education is concerned, the initial selection for, and separation of, pupils through banding is totally opposed to the basic tenets of this ideology [...] the form and principles of the previous bipartite system of education remain embedded within the comprehensive school.

(Ball 1981:283, 284)

Ball stressed Beachside was in a process of change between two organisational systems. The culture, or ethos, of the school, and how this structured pupils' school careers, could not be radically changed overnight. Ball therefore introduced a comparative element into his study, between the experiences of banded pupils (Years 2 and 3) and the first cohort Beachside was able to organise into mixed-ability groups (Year 1) under its restructured system. The first mixed-ability intake was organised into form-groups designed to contain a spread of academic abilities. Beachside used information from feeder schools to deliberately construct the form-groups to involve a spectrum of abilities, rather than rely on a random allocation that may have inadvertently concentrated some groups. Ball's comparison of banded with mixed-ability groups led him to the same conclusion – simply placing mixed-ability pupils in environment and classroom did not equate with equal opportunity:

Mixed-ability grouping creates, in effect a situation where many fewer working-class pupils have the opportunity to experience major success roles in the classroom, because of the tendency of middle-class children to dominate the top positions in examinations and tests.

(Ball 1981:289)

The competition for classroom status was the same and sufficiently developed *inside* the form-group to create a hierarchy, even without the stigma of banding, setting or streaming:

The mixed-ability form-group appears to reproduce a microcosm of the banding system, with the processes of differentiation and polarization taking place *within* each form-group [...] as the distribution of middle-class pupils across the whole cohort creates a situation where it is possible from them to dominate the formal success roles and statuses in the classroom, both major and minor.

(Ball 1981:273, 274, original emphasis)

The mixed-ability form-group situation carried the same tensions of cohorts organised into bands. The criterion on which competition took place remains the same. In drawing this conclusion, Ball challenged the radicalism of the comprehensive initiative as it appeared at Beachside. Not only had the idealistic rhetoric of comprehensivisation failed to appear, but also there was the additional danger of superficially reading comprehensivisation as synonymous with equal opportunity. In reality, “mixed-ability grouping in fact represents a new ideology of implementation in the British school, which replaces more traditional ideologies whose legitimacy has been called into question” (Ball 1981:289).

Ball demonstrated his argument derived from the analysis of his fieldwork. For example, Ball’s fieldwork revealed the new subtle forms of ascription taking place. At Beachside, comprehensivisation had less eliminated the effect of differentiation, than re-located key instances of differentiation:

the analysis of options and curriculum choices reveals a mechanism that in many respects replaces the streaming of earlier times. Options have apparently inherited the function of finely differentiating pupils beyond the coarse labelling of band.

(Ball 1981:xiii)

Ball positioned the teacher in a central role in pupils' differentiation, as had Hargreaves and Lacey. The role of the teacher was an important continuity between the banding and mixed-ability systems. The way Ball analysed the role of the teacher reveals the emphasis upon *process* in the differentiation-polarisation thesis. Through his discussion, an understanding is gained of how structures influence and construct individual identity:

In the mixed-ability context it is apparent that it is the teacher who is the prime agent of selection. His relationship with the pupils in the classroom is fundamentally concerned with the separation and ranking of them according to perceived academic ability, and the allocation of status. This contributes to their development of self-image and a sense of worth – which may be inevitable in a competitive system.

(Ball 1981:284)

Ball offered many detailed examples. For example, Ball described 'cueing' as one mechanism through which pupils are made aware of their relative status in the classroom. Cueing occurs through the reading out of exams results, teachers' comments when returning homework, or when the form is divided up or in the choice of people to answer questions. Informal "cueing may also occur in the flippant remark that is intended to embarrass or rebuke" (Ball 1981:271). Teacher cueing structures pupils' self-images, as pupils come to define their ability in response. "Cues are often part of the teacher's control over the organization of learning in the classroom" and Ball describes one instance in a lesson he observed (Ball 1981:271). The teacher asked for a volunteer to read the part of Green in novel they were studying. The teacher stressed Green was a large part, requiring a good reader who would not hold the class back. This brought into play pupils' own self-image, the pupils' knowledge of the teacher's perception of them and the pupils' own relative ability among peers in the form in terms of which pupils felt able to volunteer. The teacher had organised the request in such a way to stratify the class. Those who

volunteered to read the part of Green, as well as those who did not, demonstrated their internalisation of their ascribed label. More generally, it is an interactional example of how the school effected the “socialization of appropriate aspirations” for pupils (Ball 1981:278). The role of the teacher, Ball concurred with Lacey, held profound ideological consequences:

The teacher perspective transforms competition between individuals with markedly different resources relevant to the competitive process, into a competition of equals.

(Lacey 1976:83)

Through the constant comparison of abilities in the mixed-ability classroom, the social distribution of success and failure remained the same as within the banded system. Whilst “the categorising of children according to different needs in the classroom may be a pragmatic response to the practical problems of both teaching and learning in diverse groups of pupils [...] [yet] most teachers are actually committed to particular traditional conceptions and practices which they carry over into the mixed ability classroom” (Ball 1981:286).

Ball noted staff preoccupations concerned discipline and the maintenance of academic standards. He, somewhat wryly, observed the “achievement of a new social order was not a prime concern” (Ball 1981:267). Pupils experienced a double-bind, not only did the process of differentiation on the basis of academic ability affect pupils’ self-images, but the “stress placed upon social control in the social relations of the classroom may also be considered in terms of the pupils’ internalization of authority relations” (Ball 1981:285). In terms of academic and disciplinary terms, comprehensivisation at Beachside had been a success, but in terms of the idealist model of the comprehensive and the individual striving in respect of their own

learning, the ultimate criterion remained exam success. The educational experience at Beachside remained the same. Therefore, “the Beachside innovation was one of mixed-ability grouping rather than mixed-ability teaching” (Ball 1981:267). Ball’s conclusion supports Hargreaves and Lacey’s differentiation-polarisation thesis, arguing that “so long as schooling continues to be seen by teachers as a stage of preparation for what succeeds it, and achieved ability is the single, and narrowly defined, criterion for success in school, the pupils’ experience of education will inevitably be one of competition within a rigid hierarchy of rewards and esteem” (Ball 1981:289). His case study had revealed the “realities of comprehensive schooling” to be quite divorced from the ideological battles between different advocates of comprehensivisation (Ball 1981:289).

Ball’s study offers a perceptive critique of the implementation of a comprehensive model in one school. His findings at Beachside also raise wider questions over whether the principles of a comprehensive education are achievable in practice. However, for all the insight he gained at Beachside, Ball stressed his study’s restrictions:

Much of the analysis is handled through second-order constructs and categories which rigidify, simplify and reify the actual interpretations, perspectives and meanings held by the teachers and pupils. What is offered here is an approximation to reality, an account derived from the experiences of a single researcher, with all the problems of selection, chance and bias that entails; an historical snapshot of an institution in the process of change.

(Ball 1981:viii)

The strength of his study, he argued, lay in its potential to inform policy. Ball (1981) called for greater communication between sociologists of education and policy makers, arguing British Sociology of Education research offered policy-relevant findings but that the time-lag between field research and its dissemination restricted

their impact. Ball held up his own research contribution in the way it revealed how logistics and people within an institution are as important as the philosophic or pedagogic rationales for change:

What is important, I feel, is that such studies should be done in order to explore the limits of possible change within schools, in terms of school organization and curriculum, and to achieve a better understanding of the constraints and determinants which impose and maintain these limits.

(Ball 1981:xvii)

Connections and contrasts between the three studies.

The three studies together comprise a critique of two models within the tripartite system and of the comprehensive system replacing it. Their conclusions find each school system to be similarly dominated by academic competition, academic competition which pervades the internal organisation of the school and its informal social relations. In-school status is largely defined in terms of academic ability and the three studies trace how pupils respond to the status system of the school. For example, when teachers control the dissemination of rewards and status, pupils are separated and increasingly polarised between those positively perceived within the academic ethos and those devalued by it. The studies term this a process of differentiation-polarisation. Differentiation is not a product of the school environs alone, but a combination of school, home and teachers' educational values brought into play within the school. The differentiation-polarisation thesis reveals that overt practices of stratifying pupils, such as the eleven-plus examination, are continued and accentuated through the lived experience of the secondary school – whether in a grammar, secondary modern or comprehensive school system. The differentiation-polarisation thesis is therefore a powerful critique of the tripartite system's identification of three pupil-types and also of the egalitarianism of the comprehensive

initiative. The 1944 Education Act introduced compulsory secondary education for all, yet schools, through the process of differentiation-polarisation, maintain and recreate social class inequalities (Lacey and Ball 1979).

The Manchester Project acted as a strong conceptual core for all three studies. The project's concern to explain social class inequalities *inside* the system of the school was a generic frame, informing rather than dictating the direction of each study. The generic leadership offered by the Manchester Project suggests the three operated a research model more in common with analytic induction, than an inductive model such as Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated. This suggestion is supported by the different nuances between each author's findings on the source of differentiation-polarisation, that is, Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball agree more over the *result* of differentiation-polarisation than the *process* itself. Each places a different weight on the role of the school in the differentiation process. For example, Hargreaves argues in favour of the school's 'relative autonomy' above the home environment, whereas Lacey stresses the latter. Ball, in contrast, disagrees with both on how *powerful* the school can be as a tool of explanation, not in agreement with Lacey's emphasis upon community, home and school, but rather conceiving the school as a site of micro-political competition. These contrasts across the three studies challenge the basis of the differentiation-polarisation thesis. Did the three studies succeed in their objective to see the school as a social system in its own right and access the 'basic social processes' and interactions of the school? Which speaks louder within the studies – the social actors they claim they observed or the questions they took into the field (such as their concern with social class)? These questions confront the interplay between theoretical interests and the research process in the differentiation-

polarisation thesis. Do they demonstrate interplay – within an *ethnographic* research process?

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball as ethnographies.

Ethnography is often held to be synonymous with qualitative research, and the three studies certainly made extensive use of qualitative techniques. Ball (1981) argued participant observation was the leading technique of his study, yet in the balance of the whole monograph, it is hard to see that this claim is substantiated. Lacey (1970) also argued his participation within the school was the key to his approach, but it is the written accounts (questionnaires) and official documents (school records) on which his understanding of Hightown rests. Lacey (1970) bears out that observational data played a secondary role within his monograph, when he argued his substantive data derived from the early fieldwork (1962-4), the first three years of the ‘panel study’ on the 1962 (1st Year) intake and school and local education records. Whilst Lacey does offer a series of detailed pupil profiles in one chapter, the richness and illumination of these examples are reduced by the monograph’s statistical emphasis to a status of passing vignettes. Delamont (1984) makes a telling observation in relation to Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1971), when she notes that both:

contain far more data derived from written questionnaires than actual accounts of the observation [which] means that both their books tell us more about social relations expressed in writing than they do about what the fieldworker actually saw.

(Delamont 1984:22-3, 23)

Hargreaves, in his use of the qualitative data, argued he wrote “as objectively as possible” (Hargreaves 1967:x). His study included participant observation, but the use of that data is statistical:

The study does not intend to test specific hypotheses derived from current theories. Rather the research is exploratory in nature and focuses broadly on the structure of the informal groups of pupils and the influence of such groups on the educative process. At the same time an attempt has been made to find ways in which these observed processes can be measured and subjected to statistical analysis.

(Hargreaves 1967:x)

Hargreaves later claims that “wherever possible the boys speak for themselves” as “such evidence is more direct, vivid and self-evident in its implications than the narration of observed incidents” (Hargreaves 1967:xi). By implication, he argues direct quotation is more valid and reliable, yet this sits uneasily with his subjection of qualitative results to quantitative yardsticks. The juxtaposition of qualitative techniques with quantitative analysis is further complicated by his use of an interactional terminology (social relations, informal groupings, an exploration of processes). In addition, his placement of the first person within the monograph is confusing. Throughout he distances his own role at Lumley, referring to the second person of ‘the researcher’ yet in the conclusion moves to use the term ‘we.’ The assumption is left to the reader that he refers to his colleagues at Manchester, to whom he refers in the acknowledgements.

The under-emphasis on, or perhaps missed opportunity, of participant observation is one point the studies fall short of an ethnographic approach. An additional shortcoming, or at least confusion, is the case studies are held up as whole school analyses. The Manchester Project held up the school as itself a social system. In terms of each study’s translation of this to understanding the interplay between internal organisation and social relations, each study captured this dynamic at work. However, the actual data underpinning key discussions and representations of the school rest upon small groups or cohorts. For example, Ball’s discussion of the

mixed-ability forms (in contrast to the banded groups) rests on one form (although he had followed two). Similarly Hargreaves largely focused upon the final year cohort, and within that group the top and bottom sets. Each study offers an account of a school system, and indeed, some of the larger questionnaire data sets include large groups, yet in actuality their detailed analyses lie with a much smaller population inside the school.

A final irony is that each author remained sceptical to the intrinsic value of the second-order data they collected. For example, of the socio-matrices used extensively by all three as evidence of peer groupings, they were critical of the transient and turbulent nature of adolescent friendship patterns. In addition, both Lacey and Hargreaves are critical towards the application of social class as a descriptive variable, albeit on different grounds. Hargreaves suggests “that discussions of the social class composition of schools often exaggerate the influence of social class at the expense of other variables” (Hargreaves 1967:220). Lacey later understands social class was the dominant analytic category of the time (Lacey and Ball 1979).

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball in context.

In overview, Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball’s emphasis on secondary indicators (the analysis of questionnaires, socio-matrix data and school records) is contrasted with the data collected and applied in recent ethnographies in the Sociology of Education (such as Pole 1993, Thorne 1993 and Hey 1997) and the differentiation-polarisation thesis appears to rest, less on ethnographic research, than statistics. Considering the vast amount of statistical data each collected during the course (and even after, in the

case of Lacey) it seems quite an achievement they found the time for classroom observation, *per se*.

Several points have arisen in considering the three studies as ethnographies. First, that it is questionable whether differentiation-polarisation rests on the level of interactional observation that the authors themselves claim. Second, that it is not sufficient to collect ethnographic data for a study to constitute an ethnographic piece of work, yet with this second point, the retrospective analysis of their studies reveals that what can be said to constitute ethnography has changed over time. Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's monographs have simultaneously been held up as radical in their use of qualitative methods, yet criticised for the low prestige they accord qualitative data in their analyses. This contradicting tension arises from isolating Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work from the methodological debates surrounding their work.

The opening chapters of this thesis established that modern ethnography does not *preclude* the use of quantitative techniques. Understanding the methodological debates that reached this position permits a more sophisticated reading of differentiation-polarisation theory, than to summarily dismiss the data on which the theory rests as 'un-ethnographic.'

The 'two methodological subcultures.'

The ethnographic approach has now become established to the extent that it is now the dominant approach in some sub-disciplines (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

Such a climate is very different to the one in which Hargreaves and Lacey, in particular, were working. The Manchester School, in the history of the development

of qualitative research, has been cited as an early champion of the approach (Atkinson *et al* 1993, Burgess 1984). Manchester sociologists connected to Hargreaves and Lacey's project also went on to further establish qualitative research within other British universities, for example, Ronald Frankenberg and Valdo Pons.¹⁵ In this sense, anthropology had come home.

The School can also be located in a wider trend developing on both sides of the Atlantic to apply observational methods to the study of sociologists' own society (Burgess 1984). American sociology of deviancy moved to study drug-taking and drug use (Becker 1963), poolroom cultures (Polsky 1969) and homosexual communities (Humphreys 1970). British studies included drug use (Young 1971), moral panics (Cohen 1972) and male, adolescent gang (Patrick 1973). Manchester's contribution was therefore two-fold; a conceptual challenge to the established canons of positivism of earlier Sociology of Education (cf. Banks 1955 and Shipman 1968) which was actualised through a commitment to anthropological research.

The explosion of qualitative studies (Delamont 1990, Agar 1996) that characterised the decade following the Manchester Project shifted methodological debates towards a polarisation of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Qualitative researchers offered a variety of responses to the attacks made on their work by the previously dominant research forms. They responded by claiming the same generality as quantitative research (cf. Yin 1984) to a totally opposed and incompatible ontology (Oakley 1981). The use of quantitative alongside qualitative which Hargreaves,

¹⁵ Valdo Pons is the connection between Burgess' (1983) monograph, based on Burgess' doctoral thesis, and the Manchester Project. Pons moved from Manchester to Warwick University where he supervised the early stages of Burgess' doctoral research.

Lacey and Ball enjoyed was rendered problematic. Hargreaves' and Lacey's approach preceded the bi-polarisation between both quantitative and qualitative researchers, and within the latter. The timing of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's use of multiple methods precedes the methodological storm, which for many years rendered their combination problematic. Differentiation-polarisation's combination of techniques had been fundamentally important to the formation of the theory:

The core methodology of the study was without question participant observation and observation. Yet in a sense the most important breakthrough for me was the combining of methods, and the integration of these in the analysis.

(Lacey 1976:77)

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball could be understood to operate from a 'fitness of purpose' rationale, using methods that would shed light on the processes they were researching. Burgess (1984) argues that this approach holds that "no method is considered superior to any of the others, for each has its own strengths and weaknesses, especially when considered in relation to a particular problem" (Burgess 1984:143). However, there is an important difference in the position Burgess is advocating. Multiple methods, he argues:

suggest little more than flexibility over methods. Accordingly, I suggest the term *multiple strategies* to allow the researcher to use a range of methods, data, investigators and theories within any study and so overcome any problems of bias. However, in using this term I have a further aim; that is not only to see different approaches used alongside one another but also to see them integrated within the course of an investigation.

(Burgess 1984:146)

Burgess (1984) is attempting to move away from the limitations of the three-point triangulation metaphor to a more complex model. Burgess (1984) finds a debate between the pros and cons of one method over another less useful than a consideration how they can work in unison. However, the article Burgess (1982) cites to support his integrated model (Sieber 1973), prioritises a quantitative model in which

qualitative research is less integrated than ‘tacked on’. Ironically enough, it is a form of ‘multi-strategy research’, which is neither as flexible nor as integrated as Burgess, or Sieber suggest.

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball’s work largely precedes the “polemic” division between the “two methodological subcultures” (Sieber 1973:1335) and whilst their work displaces the qualitative data they collected in favour of the quantitative, their free *use* of both can almost be seen to pre-guess later methodological conclusions. The work has attracted attention and admiration on this very basis:

Perhaps even more significant is their willingness to use quantitative data. This includes not only ‘official statistics’ or various kinds, but also quantitative data they have generated themselves such as teachers’ rankings of pupils, and sociometric data. The use of quantitative indices may be one reason why some commentators are reluctant to count Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball’s work as ethnographic. But while it may be true that the authors do not always make as much use of qualitative data as they might (both Lacey (1976) and Hargreaves (1967) treat quantitative data as more objective than qualitative data), they do use a considerable amount of qualitative data, and often to great effect.

(Hammersley 1985:254)

Hammersley’s reading of the differentiation-polarisation thesis.

Hammersley offers a detailed reading of the three studies and proposes differentiation-polarisation theory as a model for the development of theory through ethnography. This is a clear example of an interpretation that (whilst not entirely removed from the initial concerns of the three studies) takes a direction unanticipated by the original authors.

Lacey (1970) claims for his own study that its “significance is not confined to the particularistic concerns of this one school. It extends to general problems in sociology and education” (Lacey 1970:xi). Lacey reasoned from Frankenberg’s

maxim that ‘only the particularistic can illuminate the universalistic.’ Hammersley’s (1985) use of differentiation-polarisation theory operates from a different agenda, that is, his concern is to draw from the studies a methodological model – a paradigm for theory testing. He selects differentiation-polarisation theory as an example of a theory whose “validity is reasonably well-established” (Hammersley 1985:250). Hammersley’s concern is aimed towards “producing effective explanations for social phenomena” (Hammersley 1985:250). The process starts with a ‘theory’ derived from fieldwork, which then seeks to “test a wide range of specific hypotheses deriving from it” (Hammersley 1985:250, 251). Hammersley holds differentiation-polarisation as a theory that (a) is not a readily obvious explanation and (b) that has alternatives (for example, Willis’ 1977 resistance theory). For Hammersley, differentiation-polarisation’s attraction is that it “shows the feasibility of the positivist model of theory” (Hammersley 1985:250). This is a far stronger programme than Lacey’s intent to illuminate the universalistic.

The positivist model of theory, or Hammersley’s (1985) model of it, involves the testing of the “validity of a theory through the study of cases selected on strategic grounds” (Hammersley 1992:20). Communication across studies is crucial.

Researchers “coordinate their studies in a systematic way to focus on the testing of particular theories, and [...] modify their data collection and analytic procedures substantially” to achieve this end (Hammersley 1992:21). Hammersley (1985), unlike his contemporaries, cites a form of ethnography that enjoys the “language of concepts and indicators” and “systematic theoretical sampling” (Hammersley 1985:254).

Common characteristics include an aim to vindicate theory, a narrow focus, the

selection of cases for study followed by careful sampling within those sites and, finally, the identifications of indicators or measures to study concepts:

the focus is not on any given events, but rather on a particular theoretical idea, and those aspects of *any* event whose investigation might facilitate the development and testing of that idea. The central concern is the clarification of variables and relations intrinsic to the idea; the identification of indicators for those variables; and the testing out of predictions derived from the theoretical idea. The goal of such theorizing is a set of conditionally universal (and clearly specified) claims of the basic form; given certain conditions, if such and such a type of event (A) occurs, it will be followed (or accompanied) by an event of type B. On this model, theories do not *describe* the world; they are not accounts of the relations between events in a particular setting, or descriptions of the interrelation of social structures in society, or models of the causes of a phenomenon. They are not empirical generalizations of any kind. Rather, they are statements of some of the general principles which generate socio-historical events.

(Hammersley 1985:247)

Hammersley argues there is a shortage of ethnographies meeting this criterion –

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball are a refreshing exception. Hammersley (1985) describes them as non-experimental forms of research, yet whose results have been theoretical:

the work of these three authors focuses on the same set of theoretical ideas, developing and testing these ideas in different settings. It provides a cumulative research programme, and as such is virtually unique in the sociology of education.

(Hammersley 1985:246)

He argues Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball fit his model as “where appropriate they seek representative samples” (Hammersley 1985:253). Additionally, their multi-strategy research approach (including quantitative and qualitative methods) is appropriate, as “one should use any data that are available, of whatever type, if they allow one to develop and test one’s theory effectively” (Hammersley 1985:255).

Hammersley applies his model to Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball’s work retrospectively.

If he had himself constructed a model for the cumulation of knowledge through

ethnography, this would constitute a model to test in later research. However, as he applies, or imposes, a model *upon* Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work, he undermines the logic of process underpinning his own model of cumulation. That is, the basis of his argument is that theory is formed through the process of ethnographic research and he looks to construct a model from studies whose conclusions have not been formed through the theoretical concern Hammersley applies to them. One fundamental difference is epistemological. Logical positivism (or rather, Hammersley's model of it) does not integrate with the approach of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. When he identifies "a considerable practical problem in applying the hypothetico-deductive method to ethnographic research" it is not for lack of ethnographic studies (Hammersley 1992:21). However, his reading that "the only example of a series of participant observation studies that remotely approximates to this is the work of Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and Ball (1981) in the Sociology of Education," he is also mistaken (Hammersley 1992:21). The form of analytic induction applied in these works is based on different opening concerns, which sit uneasily with the model Hammersley proposes. Whilst they do constitute a series of closely connected monographs, each stands alone in terms of fieldwork approach and authorship, which is not in keeping with Hammersley's reading. They are also far less concerned with a theoretical programme than Hammersley seems to assume. It is perhaps the unusual integration of quantitative and qualitative methods within the three studies that has led to this confusion.

Hammersley's reading of differentiation-polarisation theory is influenced by a wider agenda for ethnography. It forms part of his general call for greater theoretical continuity between ethnographies. He discusses the Sociology of Education as one

such example. Hammersley argues studies in the Sociology of Education have not been sufficiently concerned with preceding work and findings and, in addition, have “been shaped by a very different set of methodological principles” (Hammersley 1985:244). Hammersley (1985) cites symbolic interactionism, social phenomenology and ethnomethodology as some of the diverse influences that have come to underpin studies. Whilst there has been a growth in the literature and the expansion of interpretive, interactional-level research, Hammersley’s (1985) point is that a coherent body of research has not appeared. However, when he suggests this it perhaps indicates his personal preferences for the direction in which ethnographic research should have proceeded, rather than the directions which have been taken. That is, the number of theoretic models available has also grown. Later studies within the realm of generally symbolic interactionist research (in the sense Rock 1979 defines symbolic interactionism) are unfairly defined by as Hammersley as unsuccessful. When Hammersley makes a call for theory but his call is not generic – he has a particular kind of theoretical development and model in mind, as his more recent work reveals (Hammersley 1995, 2000).

The chapter has offered an insight into the differentiation-polarisation theory from a number of perspectives – both from the objectives of the project and a close reading of their particular enterprise from another author. From these two different angles, the basis upon which the differentiation-polarisation thesis rests has been critiqued as ethnographic *per se* and also primarily theory-driven. What potential, if any, remains in the theory of differentiation-polarisation to understand the processes of theory development through ethnographic research? One direction lies with approaching the studies, less

by setting a rigid criterion for each study to achieve, or trying to read their work as exemplars of an approach, than by stressing their individuality along a much broader dimension.

The third study within the Manchester project.

The most outstanding omission from the discussion of differentiation-polarisation, and one which is also largely found in the secondary literature, is the omission of the third study within the Manchester Project by Lambart, at 'Mereside' girls' grammar school. In considering Lambart's relevance, and perceived irrelevance, further insight into differentiation-polarisation as a theoretical idea is revealed.

Lambart's study continued the concerns of the Manchester Project with interactional behaviour with structural and societal inequalities. There was also much methodological parity between her research and Hargreaves and Lacey's. Lambart took a role inside the school as a member of teaching staff and included classroom observation. Lambart (1982) describes the 'ethos' of the school was, like Lacey's Hightown, middle-class and academic. However, in contrast to Lacey's grammar, Mereside Grammar did not stream pupils. First year pupils were allocated into three forms by "a method calculated to make each roughly alike in its mixture of ability" (Lambart 1982:191). However, Lambart (1982) argued a form of "crypto-streaming" occurred in the second and third years, as pupils were organised into a top, second and 'General' sets (Lambart 1982:192). However, Lambart's (1982) analysis concluded that "no clear connection existed between social class and membership of the General set of third-year girls in 1963 (intake of 1961)" (Lambart 1982:193), a very different finding to Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. Whilst Lambart (1982) agreed working-class

pupils at Mereside with a high level of achievement “suffered difficulties of integration in relation to either staff or peers” (Lambart 1982:206), Lambart’s identification of differentiation-polarisation is less across a year cohort than intra-form. The source of this differentiation she finds the same as Hargreaves and Lacey, centrally, in response to the “school’s academic values” (Lambart 1982:194):

Mereside’s stress on academic achievement was related to shifts of membership which occurred in 1Y’s informal structure during its member’s first year.
(Lambart 1982:196)

Lambart’s analysis, like Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball’s, analyses pupils’ internalisation of the cultural values of a school but includes how changing nuances *inside* a group have a bearing on pupils’ differentiation. For Lambart, the ethos of the school and pupils’ intra-set relations were the key dynamics, as “the informal structures were also clearly connected with the perception of both pupils and teachers” (Lambart 1982:198). Lambart’s model drew the interactive qualities of peer group networks directly into the centre of her analysis – and how they could be both simultaneously pro and anti school. Hargreaves and Lacey’s discussions had tended to focus on groups or individuals towards the extremes – isolates or anti-school pupil collectives. Lambart’s analysis of one form at Mereside drew in, as she describes them, the intangibles of pupils’ intra-set relations in the first year in a new school culture.

“Observation showed that in teaching forms mistresses invariably faced an informal structure” and Lambart (1982) explored one informal pupil group, ‘the Sisterhood’ (Lambart 1982:196). Lambart sought to examine how pupils within the Sisterhood operated as individuals, in groups and as an aggregate. Her findings support the argument that the form-group is a key site where these networks influence pupils’ school careers to a greater degree than Hargreaves’ emphasis upon in-school

processes. She compared an instance of anti-school behaviour by a member of the Sisterhood (Janice) and a girl outside (Marlene):

the protective function of the Sisterhood for Janice was clear: for instance, when she threw her books and pencil case to the floor Joyce Green [another member] swiftly picked them up. In fact both Janice and Marlene went unpunished, and when, in the face of O.'s [the teacher] obvious distress, I asked why she had not sent them to Miss German [the head], O. replied: 'What's the use? I don't think she's sort of frightening enough.'

(Lambart 1982:204)

Lambart is demonstrating two points here. Firstly that the form-group can be held up as a relatively autonomous site within the school (for example, in terms of disciplinary standards) and, second, the importance of informal social networks inside a form-group. The Sisterhood offered a mutual support network for its members, but not those outside. Lambart's analysis shows how informal groups, as well as individuals, competed for status rewards inside the classroom and protected its members. She offered a detailed discussion of one pupil's, Marlene's, career at Mereside. Her approach echoes Lacey's individual pupil profiles, which demonstrated how pupils' networks could be important for the acceptance into a stream, but in far greater detail.

Marlene had been placed in one of the top sets at Mereside, but had failed to 'settle' and had remained on the periphery of the form's different informal friendship groups. Marlene's failure to integrate became embroiled in the competitions taking place between different groups inside the form. One example of the competition between friendship groups and Marlene's involvement is the election of a form captain. Lambart provides a detailed account of the social dynamics within the form. The two main competing groups in the form were unable to successfully elect one of their own members, and rather than allow a member of another group to take up the position,

conspired to elect an isolate within the form - Marlene. However, Marlene's less-than-successful integration into the academic ethos of the set and her identification as one of the "key deviants" of the form led the teaching staff to refuse the pupil's election (Lambart 1982:203).

Lambart makes a more general claim, arguing "when key deviants came together from different forms they contend with one another to be deviant-in-chief" (Lambart 1982:205). During the period when the captaincy of the class remained unresolved, Marlene behaved in competition with another key deviant who enjoyed the protection of a wider peer group. Despite the direct intervention of the head and several teaching staff, "the Head spoke to the form, asking if any group would take Marlene in," her behaviour eventually warranted the intervention of the Head in a more formal capacity and she was expelled:

Marlene's difficulties were probably attributable in part to her early failure to secure integration within the informal structure of the Z form, and her home background may have been decisive in this, though not all girls from single-parent homes failed to secure such integration. The informal structure of the third-year forms may also have had an adverse effect on her, in the sense that the functions of groups and other elements led them to militate against classroom control, particularly through inter-group tensions. And, whereas groups might act to keep their members within the limits to which they had found indiscipline might pass, Marlene was not subject to such safeguards.

(Lambart 1982:207)

Lambart's analysis points out that the seeds of Marlene's failure at Mereside were sown well before the formal intervention of the school and her eventual expulsion. Lambart found that pupil hierarchies, notably the Sisterhood, had served to position Marlene outside both the pupil and school's behavioural codes. Lambart's conclusions, therefore, in contrast to Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball, placed a higher priority on peer interaction in the generation of differentiation. Whilst Lambart also

discussed the influence of social class background, type of home and area of residence, she found intra-group networks one point where exceptions existed. If Lambart's study is included within the general differentiation-polarisation thesis, she offers the balance of gender Hargreaves and Lacey lack and the focus on social interactions the three sought. Lambart's study therefore, makes an important addition to the theory. In many ways, it offers the interactional analysis to which the original project aspired.

The placement of the researcher within the text is another point of difference between Lambart's work and the other three. Lambart writes herself into her study in a far more explicit way than Hargreaves. For example, we receive far more descriptive detail of both her teaching encounters with pupils and her discussions with teaching staff. We also learn of moments when she was refused access to classrooms, for example, to observe a recently qualified teacher. We see Lambart engaged in the school much in the same way that some of Lacey's pupil profiles revealed he was deeply involved in some pupil's individual cases. Lacey, for example, involved himself in the cases of some students, championing their cause, whilst with others he took a passive role. Lambart reveals that she had herself sent Marlene to the Head as a result of Marlene's bad behaviour in class. Lambart also described how the behaviour of the form-groups was at times more problematic and that she had the impression this was a result of her own involvement. Whilst the other studies discuss some difficulties in their data collection, such as Ball describing how staff records were incomplete or when not all staff had participated in his modelling of pupils, Lambart's reads far more reflexively.

The omission of Lambart's work from the secondary literature's discussion of differentiation-polarisation theory is confusing. Ball's (1981) complete lack of reference to the study is particularly curious, considering his familiarity with the Manchester Project's work. Why has Lambart's study not received the same attention accorded the other three (Delamont 1990 is one exception)? For example, Delamont (1990) makes a damning criticism of Lacey (1970), when she argues there is a danger to read his work as a general representation of UK grammar school education to the complete exclusion of girls. The importance of gender was certainly of a lower priority than today (Deem 1980, Delamont 1990, Ball 1995). One reason perhaps lies in the dissemination of Lambart's findings.

Lambart's results have not enjoyed the same profile as the others. Her results are only available in the form of her MA thesis (Lambart 1970) and two chapters in edited collections (Lambart 1976, 1982). Whilst both articles are in prominent books,¹⁶ their capacity to contribute in the same way as an individual monograph stands restricted. (For example, Lacey 1970 was listed as the second most influential texts by academic sociologists in the seventies by Platt 1976). This cannot be said to be a result of insufficient results – Lambart's findings on differentiation-polarisation are on a par with Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's. The format of an article, or chapter, permitted Lambart little space for more than a brief overview of her methodological approach – unlike Hargreaves, the option of an explicatory appendix was not available.

Lambart does not phrase her conclusion as strongly as the differentiation-polarisation thesis is phrased in the other three studies. This may be for a number of reasons.

16 The former was an Open University set book and the latter a festschrift for Max Gluckman, edited by Frankenberg.

First, the level of description and unit of analysis each article describes is lower than Hargreaves, Lacey or Ball. She concentrated upon a particular set of girls within one form. Second, her implicit theoretical model is interactionist, albeit framed within the disciplinary context of the school as a whole – but she is perhaps without the benefit of literature which would lend the intellectual credibility to her analysis, references which were subsequently available for Ball. That is, whilst the Manchester Project preceded the stigma of a bi-polarised debate, in reverse, ethnographic techniques had not emerged to the degree of prominence they currently enjoy. For example, the plethora of supporting literature was not available, although Ball¹⁷ was able to draw upon early examples (Berger and Luckmann 1967, Schutz 1972, Becker *et al* 1961, Young's 1971 collection, Nash 1973 and Delamont 1976). In conclusion, it may be possible to suggest Lambart's findings are a useful addition, but her study offers more of a study *within* a school, than a case study of a school. The nuance her work brings to the differentiation-polarisation thesis is its emphasis upon pupil informal networks and intra-form-group differentiation – and how they are both influenced by the ethos of the school yet relatively independent when examined within the confines of the form-group.

The differences in the way Lambart writes herself into her study follow a trend in more recent methodological writings. The individual researcher's role within field research has come very much to the fore in British ethnographic writing over the past two decades. For each landmark monograph that has appeared, a plethora of methodological reflections have accompanied them. For example, the number of

17 Although it is interesting to note Ball also cites noted functionalists, including Durkheim, Merton and Parsons.

articles Burgess has written around his monograph (Burgess 1983) risks exceeding the length of the original monograph.

In the light of reflexivity and the more anecdotal writing of the self into ethnography, a greater freedom is permitted to explore and examine the less tangible features of the research process.

Seminars and informal discussions were held, and the researchers co-operated wherever possible in the design of questionnaires and in the sharing of fieldwork experiences. The additional knowledge and insight gained through these exchanges became part of the research process, but each field worker retained individual responsibility for his own research, both in the collection of data and in the presentation of results.

(Lacey 1970:xii.)

Reflexivity also allows differentiation-polarisation theory to be evaluated on the less explicit influences surrounding its development. In terms of the theoretical cumulation of differentiation-polarisation, Hammersley does not offer the only possible model, for when he laments the shortage of well-developed and systematically tested theory in sociology, he risks suggesting there has been no development at all. Lacey refers to a dozen or so studies which have used the idea of differentiation-polarisation in new studies (Lacey and Ball 1979). For example, Woods' (1979) develops an interactionist model of classroom relations stemming from the differentiation-polarisation thesis. Woods (1979) identifies less a bi-polar model of pupil differentiation, than eight different pupil attitudes that vary across subjects and teaching staff. Delamont (1984) and Burgess (1983) also argue their own doctoral research developed concerns relating closely to the differentiation-polarisation thesis. For example, Delamont (1984) argues her own doctoral research aimed to challenge differentiation's applicability in a school system at the other end

of the spectrum; hence her fieldwork was conducted in an independent, single-sex girls' school, although, like Lambart, her findings did not become a full monograph. (Delamont 1984 offers a rare discussion in the literature of her dialogues with publishers.) These are instances of theoretical development and influence into new forms of research. In this sense, differentiation-polarisation does offer an example of an ethnographic theoretical idea used and refined through active fieldwork – theoretic development but not as Hammersley would define it.

Summary.

Differentiation-polarisation theory, as suggested at the opening of the chapter, offers a rare case of theory development from qualitative research within the Sociology of Education (Hammersley 1985). The 'deconstruction' of the theory's historical and methodological background in this chapter positions the theory in its wider context. This enterprise has itself generated questions, most notably, whether differentiation-polarisation rests on an 'ethnographic' approach. The chapter suggests that the studies aspired towards, rather than achieved, an ethnographic approach yet the *timing* of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's studies (and also Lambart's) counters criticisms that their work relies less on observation than sociometric and questionnaire-based data. Understanding their work as early (even pioneering) forms of ethnography within Sociology of Education permits latitude a contemporary ethnographic monograph would not be granted (see the critique of Abraham (1989, 1995) in chapter four).

In discussing the three studies as 'ethnographies,' the difficulties in defining ethnographic research have arisen once again. The case of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball demonstrates that what can be said to be ethnographic changes over time.

Indeed, this goes some way to understanding Lambart's omission from discussions around the differentiation-polarisation thesis. These may potentially stem from, as Hammersley (1997) suggests, unresolved problems surrounding the definition of ethnography. The most important feature of differentiation-polarisation theory is that it has met the objective to find an example of theoretical development.

Differentiation-polarisation succeeded on three points. One, it was research-based. Second, that each study found evidence of a differentiation-polarisation process. Finally, the place the theory holds within the sub-discipline of the Sociology of Education.

The example of differentiation-polarisation could be understood to make a fourth, potentially negative, contribution. Through using differentiation-polarisation theory as a site for discussion, the unique circumstances surrounding the theory are also inherited and, more interestingly, the way each study retains its own unique flavour. This renders the thesis' aim to evaluate how ethnography can generally contribute to the development of theory all the more problematic. That is, grounding the generic discussions of the opening two chapters in a specific context, the discussion is localised in one example. For example, Hargreaves at the outset had not intended to concentrate entirely upon the streaming system, yet when he found this was the dominant characteristic of the school, it became essential for his study. Ball's capturing Beachside in the process of change offers a detailed account of implementation as much as differentiation-polarisation. These circumstances surrounding each study reveal a model of theory that is not attempting to formulate a theory equally applicable to all schools (either in the case of each individual study or if the four are seen collectively), but rather a series of studies that shared mutual

concerns and produced closely aligned findings. The challenge for the following chapters is to continue to respond to contemporary circumstances by offering an analysis of relevant innovations in order to lay the groundwork for chapter six's discussion of the thesis' own school case study.

CHAPTER 4. DIFFERENTIATION-POLARISATION THEORY

FOLLOWING HARGREAVES, LACEY AND BALL.

The tendency has been for studies to investigate a diverse range of phenomena, their authors moving from one topic to another, with few attempts to capitalize upon earlier work. Yet unless researchers work collectively on particular theories, investigating cases which are critical for those theories, there will be no cumulative development of knowledge.

(Hammersley 1985:253)

I swipe at a target from six different positions unevenly spaced: there is no pretence at laying down a barrage.

(Goffman 1971:11)

Introduction.

Chapter three established differentiation-polarisation theory as a positive example of theory developed through ethnographic research. The thesis, as a whole, uses differentiation-polarisation theory as a vehicle to explore ethnography's potential to contribute to theory development. Through the course of the chapter a line of development for differentiation-polarisation theory is progressively defined. By pursuing the theory, and in encountering the problems associated with such a task, this thesis directly explores the tensions of the theory-method dialectic in ethnography.

Immediately, several problems arise. The previous chapter established that Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's studies do *not* constitute a formal research paradigm, or model, for future research to follow. A second point, potentially stemming from the first, differentiation-polarisation theory features within the literature at a variety of levels, in detail and in passing. Finally, the discipline of sociology has itself not remained in an intellectual vacuum since Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work. The

problem for the chapter's task becomes, not only to draw upon commentaries specific to differentiation-polarisation theory, but also to remain abreast of issues in contemporary sociology. The task is therefore complex. Is it possible, for example, to maintain a sense of theoretical coherency? That is, by synthesising differentiation-polarisation theory with new concepts and methodologies (which is essential if the theory is to remain salient), is the internal logic of the theory compromised? For example, at what point does a 're-orientated' differentiation-polarisation theory lose all semblances to the original?

In addition to the concern for the theory's ontological coherency, the chapter has a parallel drive – to design a practical means of evaluating differentiation-polarisation theory in a contemporary comprehensive school. The thesis introduces its own fieldwork 'test' of the differentiation-polarisation theory in the chapter that follows. Chapter four, therefore, serves the important task to move the thesis beyond a secondary, text-based historical analysis of a theory, onto the development of that theory through new field research. Ultimately, it questions the durability of this or a theory produced through ethnographic research – from the context of the nineteen sixties to the present day.

Chapter overview.

The chapter adapts differentiation-polarisation theory on two levels – theoretical and methodological. It opens with a discussion of two papers' research-based evaluation of differentiation-polarisation theory (Quine 1974 and Abraham 1989). The merits in each paper's address of the theory are considered and their conclusions assessed in that light. The direction for differentiation-polarisation theory which emerges from

these two pieces is a new emphasis on the pupil inside the theory and, secondly, on the earliest stages of the differentiation-polarisation process. The criticism is that the theory previously rested on an underdeveloped concept of the pupil, in which the pupil was central to the processes of the theory but *conceptually* marginalized. The chapter pursues this aspect of the theory. The methodological challenge comes to be how best to position the pupil inside research. In addition, the *focus* had narrowed in an aim to further understand the influences, which affect the earliest stages of differentiation-polarisation formation. The new emphasis on pupils' experiences from the point of transition also introduces new literature. The chapter discusses two studies, one contemporaneous to Ball (1981), the other an up-to-date study in the late nineteen nineties. The present-day study serves to strike a contrast between the climate which developed differentiation-polarisation theory and the current situation, epitomised by legislation such as the 1988 Education Reform Act. Considering how the educational landscape has been re-defined over the past ten years is essential if the theory is to bear any saliency inside a modern comprehensive.

The additional methodological challenge over how best to access and understand pupils' school lives continues a criticism raised in the previous chapter over the researcher-as-teacher roles Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball assumed. Chapter four introduces two school case studies which adopted alternative, non-teaching roles and concludes with a series of key questions for chapter five's own fieldwork 'test' of differentiation-polarisation theory.

Quine (1974) and Abraham (1989).

Differentiation-polarisation theory enjoyed a degree of conceptual dominance in late seventies and early eighties Sociology of Education (Llewellyn 1980, Delamont 1984, Burgess 1984, Hammersley 1992). However, with such popularity, came variety.

The theory featured in subsequent research as the central focus for the discussion or as a secondary concept used in passing. Tracing the theory in all of the forms in which it appeared is impossible. The chapter can hence lay no claim to complete historical exegesis. However, two studies that used differentiation-polarisation as their central theoretical frame, offer a starting-point towards the development of the differentiation-polarisation thesis.

Quine (1974) and Abraham (1989) conducted comprehensive school case studies and re-evaluated differentiation-polarisation theory in the light of their findings, although Quine (1974) obviously pre-dates Ball (1981). Quine (1974) rejects the theory, whereas Abraham (1989) finds in support and offers a further refinement.

Quine (1974) conducted research in two comprehensive schools, although his discussion somewhat confusingly collapses them into one. Quine (1974) aimed “to examine the social benefits of extended education,” in the context of the recent raising of the school leaving age from fifteen to sixteen (Quine 1974:10). His research examined the benefits to learning, but also “to understand the way schools appeared to young people and to assess to what extent the institutions made an impact on their lives” (Quine 1974:11). Therefore, Quine approached differentiation-polarisation theory in a different manner to, for example, Ball¹⁸, yet the theory comes to be tested

18 Which may explain why Ball (1981) does not refer to Quine (1974).

through the course of his analysis. Following the logic of the theory as it stands, the extension of educational provision would serve to continue the polarisation process, rather than counter or reverse it.

Quine, for another project in which he was involved, had surveyed the fourth and fifth year of five comprehensive schools, collecting pupil IQ and reading tests scores and social class background information (by father's occupation on the Registrar General system of classification I-V). He then conducted an "interactionist" study of two of these schools, both neighbourhood comprehensives in the Midlands (Quine 1974:11). A sample was drawn from the final year, controlled for IQ and social class. The sample completed a questionnaire and took part in tape-recorded interviews a year later. Quine's (1974) conclusions rested upon this data and the research assistants' fieldwork memoranda, collected across the year.

Quine's initial screening, across five comprehensives, revealed pupils of the two case study schools were largely from working-class backgrounds. Only five per cent belonged to Levels I or II of the Registrar General's socio-economic classification of occupations. Quine (1974) further suggested the local, direct-grant grammar "creamed" both schools, but that in the context of "their catchment areas, this hardly affected their intake" (Quine 1974:10). Quine further estimated less than ten per cent would have remained in education before the school leaving age had been raised. His sample therefore reflected the pupils most affected under the change.

Quine's (1974) conclusion, whilst not entirely rejecting differentiation-polarisation theory, countered its core claims. He suggested, "the two cultures theme of the

interactionist studies may be an over-polarisation of the facts” (Quine 1974:10). His conclusions therefore did not reject the theory’s bi-polar model, as he found different value-systems in both schools:

The social values of the school are rejected by working class pupils not only because they wish to concentrate upon vocational ends, but simply because they are not the social (or expressive) values of their own culture.
(Quine 1974:10)

Quine’s challenge to the theory rests over whether the domination of one set of social values in school is detrimental to the minority with alternative values. He did not reject difference, rather the polarising process into pro- or anti- school outlooks:

Pupils, far from generally resenting the schools, quite liked them. Generally this acceptance of the school regime was stronger in the bottom sets or streams. The pupils accepted the legitimacy of the teachers and thought that ‘they often knew best’.
(Quine 1974:13)

Quine agreed that “communication between the influential [senior] and experienced staff with the pupils was of an authoritative nature,” yet pupils accepted staff authority, albeit “if this acceptance were not always wholehearted” (Quine 1974:11-12, 13). On this basis, he concluded, “the complete absence of alienation found in children who knew they were in the lower sets or streams [...] [suggested] our schools were not as polarised as previous interactionist studies have suggested” (Quine 1974:16). Quine’s conclusion was therefore an “inversion of the results of David Hargreaves (and to a lesser extent Colin Lacey)” (Quine 1974:15). At the heart of this inversion was, not the denial of differing social values, but their escalation into a debilitating and fundamental clash.

Quine’s interest in differentiation-polarisation theory led him to propose several reasons for the ‘lack’ of polarisation inside his schools. Immediately, he considered

the internal organisation of the schools. Both operated “a complicated mixture of streaming and setting,” dominated by the former, but nevertheless removed from the “total streaming” of Hightown and Lumley (Quine 1974:12). However, Quine’s analysis revealed that in practice “the ‘streaming within sets’ was pretty rigid: the seventh and lowest English set at one school had exactly the same membership as the lowest Maths set. This was not untypical throughout the schools” (Quine 1974:16). Therefore, Quine’s schools echoed the “crypto-streaming” Lambart found at Mereside (Lambart 1982:192). The *internal* organisation of the school did not account for the ‘lack’ of a differentiating and polarising effect, as the systems were comparable to Hargreaves and Lacey’s schools. However, Quine (1974) persisted:

As the research progressed the researchers were beginning to despair of obtaining the stimulating and controversially anti-school quotes reported in similar interactionist studies. Finally, quite spontaneously, Ronnie, an intelligent early leaver, came out with [...] ‘The way teachers talk to you – get in the classroom, like get in a cell!’”

(Quine 1974:13-14).

Quine then used this “unsolicited,” “Goffman-like quote,” at every session thereafter, asking a variation of the question “a pupil has maintained that school is (or was) like a prison, do you agree?” (Quine 1974:14). This example epitomises Quine’s misappropriation of the differentiation-polarisation thesis. It operates by a heavy-handed cyclical form of analytic induction, which lacks the theoretic and methodological sophistication necessary to assess the theory. That is, the methodological model Quine used did not sufficiently problematise what was taking place inside schools, in order to study it. Generic questions, such as, ‘what do you think the most important thing about school is?’ were, indeed, open-ended and exploratory (Quine 1974:19). However, the style of analytic induction that followed, that is, ploughing provisional answers or findings back into the fieldwork, was

flawed. Central to analytic induction is the process through which it tests a limited number of provisional 'hypotheses.' However, Quine failed to apply his hypotheses against all of his data, most notably the results of his observational data. There are no discussions, for instance, of interactional exchanges in the classroom or discussions of individual pupils. Therefore, Quine's rejection of the school as a 'prison' metaphor does not refute that the school was a constraining experience *per se*. Quine himself agrees schools are restrictive, by striking an analogy between schooling and National Service (Quine 1974:13). Considering the formally phrased manner in which he ploughed the 'prison' metaphor back into the research (and further considered this to represent a sufficient test), it is unsurprising he found no pupils agreed.

The central flaw in Quine's approach to differentiation-polarisation theory is his definition of in-school conflict. He perceived the meaning he ascribed to in-school conflict paralleled differentiation-polarisation theory's. However, Quine (1974) stressed "individual as opposed to a systematic or structural explanation," that is, a liberal, equal opportunity and meritocracy-driven model of education very different to the ideologically-informed critique of class inequality of Hargreaves and Lacey's approach (Quine 1974:17). The conceptual strength of the theory is its capacity to expose the processes through which a school's systems permeate social relations to the extent that they become a means of differentiation *sui generis*.

Quine (1974) either washes over or fails to reach this level of ontological sophistication. For example, he suggests the authoritative tone of staff belied their liberal theories and he further suggested individual teachers retained the ability to overcome the coarse labelling of bands:

Despite the hierarchical structure the teachers still preserved some individuality, there was a pluralistic, not monolithic, system in operation. [...] This optimistic conclusion suggests that the individual teacher can, and we know from literary and historical sources often does, have a vast and beneficial effect on his pupils.

(Quine 1974:16-7)

It is the case that Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) cited the influence of individual staff (for example, Mr. Wilkins and Richard King (Lacey 1970:144) and, indeed, acting themselves on behalf of pupils), but they did not share Quine's optimistic tone. Teacher expectations and their impact upon pupils' self-esteem and future performance are an important element of the differentiation-polarisation process, that is, the teacher is an agent inside the inequalities of the school system. For example, where Ball (1981) questions the process through which pupils come to be socialised into 'appropriate' expectations, Quine discussed pupils' "unrealistic expectations" with the inevitable tone that "some would be bottom" (Quine 1974:19) (Although it is impossible to fail a CSE Mode III examination, the lowest grade is U – unclassified).

A final point where Quine succeeds in teasing out some of the contradictions of the school system is when he identified that pupils and parents saw school "was useful in obtaining qualifications for jobs. The pupils accepted it in its vocational aspect but ignored its social function" (Quine 1974:21). This identified that Quine's two case study schools contained a particularly middle-class bias which Quine further exposed by pointing out that bottom-set pupils saw that the school offered qualifications useful for securing employment that they had little hope of gaining. Quine stopped short of challenging how the processes of the school effectively stratify and normalise pupils' place within the system. The hierarchies of the school system are internalised into the social relations of the school.

Quine's conceptualisation of the school is also problematic. Whilst he discussed the internal organisation of the school, he fails to read the school as a semi-autonomous unit in its own right; a central component to the differentiation-polarisation thesis. That is, the internal organisation of a system is internalised by the pupils in response to their relative position and status inside the system. The hierarchies of the school come to be the hierarchies of social relations in school. Quine's (1974) understanding of differentiation-polarisation theory fails to unravel the processes inside the school sufficiently. Quine identified pupils "had an accurate perception of what their teachers considered was their ability," for example, one pupil described how she was picked on by the teachers, yet he dismissed on the grounds of other pupils' accounts which argued she had a "reputation" inside the school (Quine 1974:16, 15). This evidence by Quine accounts for the *normalisation* of differentiation, rather than his analysis questioning the legitimacy of the process through which pupils are allocated and increasingly defined by their 'set' or status within the school. Quine, for example, revealed upper-set girls' "qualified disapproval" of school (Quine 1974:15). This suggests pupils' successful *internalisation* and acceptance of the school's system:

Pupils who were defined as trouble-makers [...] tended to be in the higher forms although rarely in the very highest. What evidence we have [...] tends to suggest that they were victims of a *conflict of roles*. Very few of the children desired to 'move out' from their parental and peer, status, class, or value systems; those who did were amongst the few who positively disliked school.
(Quine 1974:16, emphasis added)

Quine's application of differentiation-polarisation theory therefore lacks the ideological depth of critique of the original authors of the theory.

There are other, possible reasons as to why Quine (1974) did not identify a differentiation-polarisation process inside his two schools. In contrast to Hargreaves' (1967) school, with which Quine compares his schools most closely, a 'critical mass' of like-minded pupils to create and sustain the anti-school culture was lacking. In the case of Jennifer, a fourth year upper-set anti-school pupil, isolated opposition was not sufficient to challenge the dominant pro-school ideology and she was marginalized. What would have been interesting would have been to further examine whether her placement in one of the top sets was threatened – or the reverse, that promotion was restricted.

There are also questions whether Quine achieved the "interactionist or even phenomenological approach" he claimed (Quine 1974:11). Criticism can be made both towards his own, personal engagement but also methodologically. The data rested on the fieldwork of two research assistants and the paper is written in the collective pronoun, yet the article is sole-authored; the research assistants remain anonymous. Quine failed to participate in the field research to the same degree as his colleagues, who were both in school for a year. Quine also claimed the study was "consciously child centred" (Quine 1974:11). Yet the questions the article reveals were asked in the interviews are somewhat clumsy in their attempt to access "the actual day-to-day phenomena of the school [...] by a deliberate suspension of belief in the traditional school norms" (Quine 1974:11). For example, having collected over a hundred pages of interview transcriptions, Quine (1974) used this data for the purposes of a word count (Quine 1974:19). Another similar incident counted the number of times the words 'no' or 'not' occurred in a school assembly (twenty-nine times in seventeen minutes, Quine 1974:12). The latter provided a black-humoured

vignette, the former is a more serious misappropriation of qualitative data – removed from both context and meaning. When Quine (1974) discussed *verstehen* and the contribution of the interactionist approach, he contradicts himself by using a criterion of validity based on “meaningful hypotheses” and statistical analysis (Quine 1974:23). A final irony is provided by Quine’s suggestion that the inspirational teacher (despite his simultaneous stress upon home influences) retains the ability to exert considerable influence. This conflates the individual to almost Hobbesian proportions (Archer 1996). In summary, Quine’s distance from the field is reminiscent of pre-Malinowski anthropology, when the anthropologist’s account rested on second-hand reports rather than the researcher’s own active participation.

Quine himself places a caveat around his study by recognising that his two case study schools contained a predominantly working-class population (his study had sought to study pupils not normally remaining in school to sixteen). For example, Lacey’s Hightown Grammar had a wider distribution. Quine’s two schools therefore contained a particular bias and as a result Quine suggested his schools may not have encompassed sufficient class variations to effect differentiation-polarisation, in the same way that Hargreaves postulated there was not a sufficient critical mass of academically-orientated working-class pupils to sustain their membership of a pro-school orientation culture. Whilst immediately, this seems to suggest his study cannot provide categorical support or summary dismissal of differentiation-polarisation theory, it again indicates his misconception of the theory. Differentiation-polarisation theory is about the internal *system* of the school – rather than the constituents of the school itself (indeed, why the theory held for a secondary modern system and grammar alike). The theory emphasises inside-school processes, informed by social

variables such as social class, but also how the hierarchies of the school differentiates pupils of the *same* social class. Quine's (1974) final observation, however, remains well observed, that the division of working-class pupils into comprehensives and middle-class pupils into grammars such as he identified, rendered schools, such as he studied, comprehensive only in name – a ghettoisation of working-class pupils into working-class schools.

In summary, Quine's engagement with the differentiation-polarisation thesis is therefore theoretically and methodologically superficial, in comparison with the approach that originally generated the theory. His rejection of the theory is flawed on that basis. It would therefore be easy to dismiss Quine's work for any use towards the further development of differentiation-polarisation theory, which is the main concern here. However, either through omission or a casual treatment, some of Quine's (1974) findings can act in the positive sense of leading into new directions. The irony is that Quine's substantive findings present little that are of use, yet his more general discussion encourages new lines of enquiry.

New directions for differentiation-polarisation theory from Quine (1974).

One direction is the alternative cultures Quine (1974) identified that pupils invest themselves into, such as cultures possessing different social values to those of the school. For example, he cites one of the field memoranda of the research assistants:

Football is a symbol of a particular life-style. Sport is an alternative to IQ or education or so-called intellect. The status of football is totally different for the youth club [...] Sport is an end in itself not a means to an end like keeping fit.
(Quine 1974:21)

The pupils, he argued, “have a clear-cut culture” but that “it was not possible to understand the common-sense politics of those young people’s daily lives” (Quine 1974:21). The pupils’ different social values, as Quine identified them, are not in express conflict with the school and therefore “do not negate the findings of Hargreaves,” as both identify pupils’ investment of self lies with interests outside school (Quine 1974:23). A potential challenge would be to study points of overlap, for example, Hargreaves’ (1967) discussed the eventual breaking-down of polarised stereotypes through streams A and D’s ‘forced’ co-operation on the school rugby team.

Quine emphasised the individual teacher’s ability to offer their classroom as a bastion of independence from the school. Is there potential for the form class to counter the influence of the whole-school system, as Quine suggested?

Quine (1974) argued the classroom of the individual teacher held the potential to provide an oasis within the system of the school. Whilst Quine’s reading and conclusions on differentiation-polarisation theory have been questioned, this nevertheless could provide an interesting question for future research. If comprehensivisation continues to move away from streaming and, indeed, setting, is there potential for the form class to counter the influence of the whole-school system, as Quine suggested? Or would differentiation-polarisation continue inside the microcosm of the form class?

Abraham (1989) is another case study, which applied differentiation-polarisation theory as its central theoretical framework. Abraham’s (1989) study, like Quine’s,

tackled the problem of adapting a theoretical model for use in further fieldwork and responded to the criticism of the theory made by Quine (1974). Abraham's research, findings and the sophistication of his application of the theory are assessed, with constant consideration to how the theory may be further developed.

Abraham (1989) conducted his fieldwork in a comprehensive in a conurbation in the south of England. Unlike Quine (1974), Abraham found the "educationally conscious professional middle classes were well represented" at the school (Abraham 1989:48). In addition, the headteacher's emphasis on examination results fostered an academic ethos and Abraham characterised the school as a fairly pressured academic environment.

Abraham's (1989) methodology returned to the approach of Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and Ball (1981). He conducted the fieldwork himself. The research included a variety of ethnographically orientated techniques, such as classroom observation, school records, pupil and teacher interviews and participation in informal settings in everyday school life. However, for all of this data, Abraham's substantive analysis rested upon a series of administered questionnaires (as had Quine's).

Abraham (1989) remained modest in the claims he projected on this data set, to a greater degree than Quine (1974). For example, he queried the questionnaire's validity in relation to its administration and the completion rates. The substantive part of his analysis, he points out, rests upon the responses of one hundred and seven pupils, from a school population of approximately thirteen hundred

The most fundamental contrast between Abraham (1989) and Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work is the duration of the fieldwork. Abraham's (1989) fieldwork lasted only for a matter of months (May-June 1986), whereas even Quine's research covered a year and Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball far longer. Abraham sought to combat this by devising a range of indicators to explore potential differentiation-polarisation across the year groups. For example, Abraham (1989) used indicators such as the number of 'tickings off' given by staff to pupils, pupils' social class (Registrar General's categorisation system I-V), staff reflections on pupil behaviour and performance (on the scales 1-10 and 1-5), friendship patterns (pupils' listings of their closest friends), m.a.s. (reported missed assignments), b.b.s. ('bad behaviour' notes documented in pupils' school records) and cognitive ability tests (CATs). He then examined these data sets for possible correlations.

Abraham's (1989) school was organised internally into sets, as opposed to the banded system in place at Beachside. Sets differentiate pupils in relation to their ability for their timetabled *subjects* as opposed to bands, which use the *unit of the form-group* to structure the year cohort. Abraham's school contrasted to Quine's, in that sets were kept together across the timetable, whereas Quine's used different sets for different subjects. Whereas setting at Quine's school ultimately served to keep pupils in largely the same form-group units (in effect a crypto-streaming, to use Lambart's (1982) term once again), the setting system at Abraham's school gave more formal coherency to the setting groups.

Like Lacey (1970), Abraham had sought to examine pupils' changing attitudes towards schooling in the first four years of secondary schooling, however Abraham's

research lacked the time-scale to chart a single cohorts' progress. Abraham's (1989) therefore deployed differentiation-polarisation theory to chart pupils' careers, centrally, the relationship between academic performance and behaviour. Abraham used differentiation-polarisation theory deductively, in the sense of a hypothesis to be tested, rather than an inductive exploration of how it potentially manifested in the school. For example, Ball's approach was more inductive and he identified how course option selections became a new site for competition within the comprehensive system. Abraham's field research was therefore less exploratory than Hargreaves, Lacey or Ball's and therefore, to a certain degree, counters his limited period of data collection.

Abraham's deductive use of differentiation-polarisation theory is all the more interesting in the light of his findings. Abraham's (1989) conclusions supported the differentiation-polarisation thesis but in the process of doing so came to emphasise hitherto unconsidered sources of differentiation. That is, his research also shed light on the sources of differentiation. Abraham (1989) found sub-cultural friendship patterns between different pro- and anti- school value systems related to formal achievement (i.e. exam results), in line with Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's findings. However, Abraham argued these friendship patterns reached across the school's organisation system. Abraham (1989) used the term "intra-set differentiation" to describe how differentiation-polarisation occurred as a result of the school system *and* the pupils' own formation of independent networks outside of the groups the school organised pupils into (Abraham 1989:50). That is, hierarchies *inside* sets re-enforced friendship divisions *outside* sets. The result of Abraham's new emphasis upon pupils'

own role in their differentiation was the same – it provided the source of differentiation and sustained the subsequent divisions between groups:

Committed pro-school pupils in the middle sets tended to choose their friends from the higher sets and committed anti-school pupils tended to choose theirs from the lower sets. Consequently, each value orientation is reinforced and polarisation accentuated. [...] This indicated how intra-set polarisation leads to differences in academic performance - the part of a cycle which provides the basis for further differentiation which earlier evidence suggests leads to polarisation.

(Abraham 1989:75)

The novelty in Abraham's findings lies with the importance of the set-group. Within the set-group, hierarchies emerge and, because of the setting system in place in the school, pupils were able to identify themselves with higher or lower set pupils with the same academic-orientation. In principle, pupils were able to move up or down sets, however, the hierarchies within the set-groups (which produced differentiation-polarisation) reinforced pupils' place in a certain set. For example, to move from a middle set to a lower one would mean becoming one of the academically brightest in the lower set – a threat to the pupils' definition of themselves within the hierarchies of the school.

His comparison of year groups, and the school's different organisation of pupils in different years, drew out the importance of the school's system in accentuating polarisation. It also indicates the complex nature of differentiation-polarisation as derived from within sets and also from the 'external' setting system:

A large degree of polarisation between these two bands [...] can be attributed to the transition from the unstreamed first year to the setted second year. On the other hand, polarisation is seen to decrease in the third and fourth years by comparison with the second year, but always remains greater than that in the first year. These results can be interpreted as an indication that interset differentiation is not the sole agent in creating pro- and anti-school values which give rise to polarisation.

(Abraham 1989:60-1)

Abraham (1989) therefore highlighted the importance of setting vis-à-vis the unit of the form-group as both providing sources of differentiation. However:

the data suggest that setting creates a more dispersed form of polarisation, and this is indeed what the differentiation-polarisation theory would predict, since streaming by sets is a less severe form of differentiation than streaming by forms.

(Abraham 1989:76)

Abraham's notion of 'dispersed' polarisation compares to the extremes of a polarisation which can occur (e.g. at Lumley) across a whole year cohort – but the theory of differentiation-polarisation holds fast within the microcosm of the set-group, be it top or bottom. The tension Abraham's study captures is between the formal organisation of the school system and whether this further legitimates, or complements, the internal hierarchies and differentiation within a form.

Abraham's (1989) study, through its statistical focus may not have been able to access the minutiae of pupils' everyday lives and interaction, yet his year groups comparisons capture other in-school sources of differentiation-polarisation, namely, the form group itself:

The theory does predict, however, that differentiation (whether between ranked bands or ranked pupils within a class) is a major mechanism in producing anti-school and pro-school polarisation.

(Abraham 1989:66)

Abraham's (1989) study found the school system created and sustained, across a pupil's school career, a differentiating and polarising effect. Abraham (1989)

highlighted the introduction of setting upon a previously undifferentiated year cohort and the importance of the unit of the form class. Abraham's application of differentiation-polarisation theory found the theory held over different years and increased at certain points. He stressed the different organisation of pupils in different years and the variations of polarisation they produced, which, as Quine (1974) pointed out, implies the generic title of 'comprehensive' is ambiguous. The internal organisation of the school, whether it is a grammar, secondary modern or even different comprehensives (as witnessed by Quine, Ball and Abraham) all hold later implications.

when a comprehensive has a policy of streaming it can create the kind of social class related divisions within the same school which were previously associated with the divisions between the grammar and secondary modern, though perhaps to a lesser extent. A setted comprehensive system may be preferable to the selective grammar school system in terms of reducing social class inequalities [...] but this point is not inconsistent with acknowledging that a streamed comprehensive system can contribute to social class inequalities.

(Abraham 1989:78)

Abraham (1989) supported differentiation-polarisation theory, but made several theoretical 'hedges' which restricted the applicability of the theory. Three pupils did not match his model:

On the available evidence the other three anomalous cases cannot be explained within the theory, except in so far as one accepts that it can only predict general tendencies and not the attitudes of every particular pupil.

(Abraham 1989:69)

He suggested that further research may "explain at least some of these anomalies within the theory" and, in that sense, he raised the suggestion for future research to evaluate the applicability of the theory on a more micro-orientated level (Abraham 1989:69).

Abraham's research serves to open up several questions for the following chapter's own fieldwork 'testing' of differentiation-polarisation theory. For example, timing. The introduction of setting increased polarisation in Abraham's study, but to what extent have pupils already adopted pro- or anti-school cultures? That is, can differentiation be solely the product of small group interaction, without the 'legitimising' influence of setting or streaming in the school system?

Abraham's work stressed the unit of the form class and the importance of peer friendship networks within the theory, to a greater degree than Hargreaves, Lacey or Ball. The different organisational systems of both Abraham and Quine's studies dispersed polarisation and Quine went as far as to reject the term 'polarisation.' Differentiation-polarisation theory is interested in *process*, but in this process is resistance, epitomised by the bi-polar opposition, but also within the sets, or groups. The direction which Abraham and, to a lesser extent, Quine contributed was not to *reject* the bi-polar model, but, first, to conceptualise the form-group as a semi-autonomous social unit inside the school system and from this 'two-tone' differentiation-polarisation; school-wide and then inside the form-group. Second, the possibility of resistance. That is, to challenge the consistency of pupils behaviour as either pro- or anti- school, and even the possibility to be both. For example, Quine (1974) identified more resistance to the ethos of the school within the top sets of his study.

Quine (1974) made a related point on alternative social values. Pupils invest themselves in relation to achievements in alternative activities to academic orientation of the school. Whereas Hargreaves and Lacey noted (particularly Lacey) that anti-

school pupils who were talented at sports presented a dilemma for participating in school sports' teams (because of the tension between putting forward the best team it meant including pupils' whose behaviour did not match the 'ideal' image of the school), they tend to compartmentalise such behaviour as either pro- or anti-.

Whether these activities can run alongside a 'successful' school career, or how they potentially distract or clash with a pupils' participation in the school is an area for further investigation.

Hammersley (1985) observed Willis' (1977) resistance theory offered a counter to the differentiation-polarisation thesis. Whilst Willis' 'lads' rejected the culture of the school, to favour an expectant shop floor culture, is there scope for resistance *inside* the school system? Can pupils be placed and understood, less as actors defined by the social system of the school, than strategic actors within, but simultaneously constrained by, a school system? Abraham suggests so:

it is an oversimplification to suppose that the [...] 'correspondence' theory [...] *determines* the behavioural norms of pupils and the behavioural expectations of teachers. [...] many of the anti-school attitudes reported in this study do not reflect passivity, subordination or punctuality, the factor missing from the 'correspondence' theory is the pupils' relationship to the values of the school as a social institution. Though much remains unknown in this regard, the evidence presented here supports the view that the differentiation-polarisation theory gives a valid and significant, though not exhaustive, explanation of how the internal social system of the secondary school contributes to social class related differences in achievement and values.

(Abraham 1989:79, original emphasis)

Abraham argued differentiation-polarisation theory and Willis' (1977) resistance theory were not necessarily incompatible. How can this be measured, that is, how can forms of resistance be best defined – in formal terms such as the indicators used by Abraham (1989) or through the kind of celebration of pupil-defined culture, such as Willis (1977) engaged? Abraham's article offers little formal citation of the pupils

themselves and the main analytical thrust of the paper is statistical, even more so than Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball, which counters his claim to have followed an ethnographic research tradition. His conclusions are based on statistical correlations and analyses, rather than the study of the pupils themselves.

A new direction for differentiation-polarisation theory.

The analysis Quine and Abraham's work has created a series of points or conclusions which offer a new direction in which differentiation-polarisation theory may be further refined. The points or conclusions are:

1. Quine challenged whether anti-school pupils necessarily come into express conflict with their school, suggesting that anti-school pupils may act in benign co-existence with pro-school pupils.
2. Quine championed the ability of the individual teacher to create an atmosphere or environment that was independent from the wider influences of the school.
3. Abraham's study produced a question as to whether pupils were already pro or anti-school before the school formally differentiates them.
4. Abraham suggested that differentiation occurred as a result of formal differentiation by the school and pupils' own informal friendship groups.

The challenge these questions lay down for differentiation-polarisation theory for a new study of differentiation-polarisation theory becomes to answer the following:

1. Can anti-school pupils work alongside the rules of the school, without creating a fundamental clash?
2. Is the unit of the form-group a semi-autonomous unit within the school and what bearing does this have upon a potential differentiating process?
3. Is there evidence of pro and or anti-school orientations before the school differentiates its pupils on the basis of academic ability?
4. What bearing do pupil friendship groups have upon a potential differentiating and polarising process?

Methodologically, Quine and Abraham had strayed from the qualitatively orientated approach found in the original studies, particularly Lambart (1976, 1982). The methodological challenge for a new study would be to re-invigorate this approach. Two transition studies are now assessed in terms of the insight into schooling their research techniques provided. Following a detailed discussion of their approaches, the methodological innovations of a third, final study (Llewellyn 1980) are examined.

The move to consider the earliest point at which differentiation-polarisation may take place introduces another literature from the Sociology of Education. The field of transition studies may inform differentiation-polarisation theory in terms of how they understand pupils' induction and integration into new school cultures. The chapter now analyses two studies. The first (Measor and Woods 1984) is relevant as it makes direct reference to differentiation-polarisation theory and as it has been located within the same research 'tradition' as Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work, as has Woods' (1979) own monograph (Atkinson *et al* 1993). A second study (Nicholls and Gardner 1999) offers a contemporary picture of school transition, reflecting also how research

objectives and educational research has shifted in the time following Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. Nicholls and Gardner (1999) demonstrate a radically different research agenda to that of the Manchester Project and Ball (1981). Their study is included here to demonstrate how the use of research to inform educational theory and social policy has shifted away from a concern, or even interest, in the continuing development of theoretical ideas, towards more policy-evaluation orientated studies. Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) work therefore reinforces the aim of this thesis to reinvigorate the role of theory in educational research. This echoes Hammersley's (1985) argument that the plethora of educational studies has not produced a corresponding body of social theory.

School transition studies. Measor and Woods (1984) and Nicholls and Gardner (1999).

Measor and Woods (1984) claimed their approach to the study of school transfer was methodologically innovatory, in a similar sense to the Manchester Project's introduction of anthropological techniques to the study of education. Measor and Woods (1984) drew attention to both formal and informal schooling, arguing the latter had been neglected. Their study therefore sought a new, conceptual appreciation of the:

aims and values that exist apart from the formal, best expressed through the peer group or teenage culture. The informal culture derives from the pupil's situation and concerns. It involves the problems of adolescence, puberty and gender; but it also includes pupils' 'unofficial' adaptations to the formal organization.

(Measor and Woods 1983:3)

Measor and Woods' (1984) approach opened up the functional nature of pupil friendships – both in terms of learning and socialising. They began to ask 'who socialises?', which traced changes in identity and moved away from earlier Sociology

of Education's concentration on selection and social mobility (and to a certain extent differentiation-polarisation theory). General problems of adjustment and 'fitting in' expanded to define the pupil in a more creative sense. Measor and Woods' (1984) emphasis upon understanding the pupils' subjective experience of transfer shares the concern here to place pupils in a more prominent position within differentiation-polarisation theory.

Measor and Woods (1984) methodology fully complemented their conceptual interests. They employed a range of ethnographic techniques, exploring the experience of transfer, beyond exam results, questionnaires and pupil essays. Their approach aimed to 'live through' transition with the pupils, and the research included a brief study of one of the main feeder schools ('Hayes'). Measor also participated by taking a non-teaching role inside the secondary school for a period of eighteen months.

Measor and Woods (1984) positioned their case study school in context and studied nearby secondary schools in the Midlands. 'High Town' school (slightly different to Lacey's Hightown) faced competition from two nearby schools, one with a progressive reputation, and the other with a negative reputation. Measor and Woods' (1984) school fell in-between and was neither working-class dominated, like Quine's (1974), nor as academically pressured as Abraham's (1989).

The term 'comprehensive' can cover a variety of internal organisational systems, as Quine, Abraham and Ball's comprehensives demonstrated. Differentiation-polarisation theory concentrates on the progression of the pupil through the system of

the school and how that system comes to shape their experience. Measor and Woods were similarly concerned with the impact of the school upon the pupils, but less with their entire secondary school experience, than the immediacies of the first year.

High Town organised the first year into twelve, mixed-ability form-groups. However, the school progressively introduced a setted system for certain subjects, in the first term for Maths, the second term for Science and the third for Languages. The remaining subjects were taught in mixed-ability groups through to the Sixth Form. In addition to the divisions on academic grounds, High Town operated a more informal 'house' system. The house system split the year into four 'houses' (three form-groups in each) for pastoral and sporting activities and, occasionally, for subjects and activities and Measor and Woods (1984) conducted a special study of one house.

Measor and Woods' (1984) focus on transition presented a narrower timetable than differentiation-polarisation theory, but they further came to understand transition into a series of experiential stages. Pupils experienced the short-term, immediate fear of the 'first day' and opening weeks of the school year. The "longer time-perspective" was positive, associated with moving towards adult status (Measor and Woods 1984:13). Measor and Woods (1984) applied several metaphors to capture the experience of transition. For example, the leap to a higher platform, the need for a foothold, the fear the pupils may fall. Such metaphors, they argued, capture that short-term concerns were compensated by the long. In other words, pupils were genuinely apprehensive, "but none really doubted they would survive" (Measor and Woods 1984:8).

Measor and Woods' (1984) theoretical framework was broadly symbolic interactionist, which they applied to unravel and problematise pupils' experiences:

Transition raises basic questions about the pupil's identity. It threatens to strike at some of the foundations of self, so carefully nurtured hitherto, but still insecure because limited, and untried in wider theatres. [...] The first line of questions was how would they cope with the new demands, new situations, and new problems? But behind these was the more important consideration of what they were to become in the process.

(Measor and Woods 1984:8-9)

The climbing metaphor captures the context of change and progress, yet the theatre metaphor (applied more as a literary, than conceptual, device) captures the importance of social relationships, between peers and staff, at transition. Pupils experience a wider 'cast' in their new school, whereas previously one teacher had often served as both form and subject tutor.

The drama metaphor also captured Measor and Woods' (1984) stress on continuity *and* change in transition. The stage or territories were new, but were not a complete break from previous roles. Pupils made sense of encounters with staff through applying existing frames of reference (i.e. teacher types) and the focus on interpersonal experiences allowed Measor and Woods (1984) to analyse the roles and statuses to a greater degree than Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. For example, the division of space inside the classroom also represented divisions of status, some areas representing "privileged territory" or territories (Measor and Woods 1984:13).

Where and with whom people sat (for example, at the back or within cliques) was socially significant as they revealed 'co-operation groups' among the pupils. Within co-operation groups, pupils shared information and answers to members of their own groups, but excluded others. This is a form of differentiation, actualised through

pupils' social relations and behaviour. Measor and Woods (1984) stressed the importance of informal pupil groupings, revealed at an interactional level:

For all pupils, friendship was functional. That is to say, it served a purpose as well as resting on a sense of mutual regard. At an elementary level, friends provide help, support and reassurance; but they also help in defining the world, in making sense of situations and in establishing one's own identity [...] transfer is deeply disturbing, for it threatens to knock out the props of one's self-support system.

(Measor and Woods 1984:14)

Differentiation-polarisation theory is a theory largely describing the impact of an *organisational system* upon social relations within that system. Measor and Woods' (1984) exploration of transition begins to challenge the determinacy of the school's social system upon social relations inside the school. Their emphasis upon the supporting (and excluding) nature of peer relations begins to demand too much of a dramaturgical metaphor, which implies the pupils roles are pre-given and immutable. Measor and Woods' (1984) study serves to challenge this, arguing transition is more than the inculcation of pupils into a new school culture. They demonstrate this through a discussion of school transfer myths. Pupils' interpreted myths involved a sophisticated and critical translation of the stories about their new school.

Myths, as they appear in the work of anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss and Malinowski, do not function in a literal sense, that is, as a formal code to be followed, but as a critical resource. Measor and Woods (1984) understand pupils' use of myths in this latter sense. For example, pupils do not wholeheartedly believe the myths they hear about their future school. They are able to differentiate between myths and other stories (such as about uniform) in the accuracy of the information they convey.

Measor and Woods (1984) argued myths are a form of secret message, or intellectual riddle, which pupils come to critically decode.

For example, myths can act as a warning. They can provide information on dangerous places inside a school, wherever teacher supervision is least strong and where formal control is weakest, for this is where there is the most threat of bullying and unregulated interaction. Myths and stories therefore act as guidance on how to avoid trouble. Myths in the immediacies of transfer are therefore two-edged, both information and mis-information.

Measor and Woods' (1984) example of mis-information revealed that expectations did not always match reality. They describe the rat dissection myth. Pupils all encountered stories about rat dissection lessons at secondary school. The myth revolves around stories that the rat is still alive, or similarly gruesome details. In the reality of the dissection lesson, the rat proves to be "safely dead and [...] had in fact been deep-frozen," but the context of the dissection (and its squeamish nature) gives greater space "for the play of conventional female susceptibilities" (Measor and Woods 1984:25). Measor and Woods (1984) observed the stereotypes did not always match the reality. In the dissection class Measor and Woods (1984) observed, it was not a girl who fainted, but a boy and another boy fainted three days later after watching a video of the birth of a baby. Transition is an imperfect mirroring of myth to reality, which pupils negotiate and come to re-enact for future generations of pupils by re-telling the myths themselves.

Measor and Woods (1984) argued myths served to lay some emotional and social preparation work for pupils' transfer, but myths operated in a second sense as a source of informal social control. One example they provided again related to gender and,

specifically, challenges to male identity. The general myth of the 'queer teacher' (always male), once the initial transition is made, passes to the weaker boy in class. In the course of their analysis, Measor and Woods' (1984) understand myths as a means of peer differentiation as the myth is internalised, or strategically taken into, the peer culture of the pupils. The subtlety of Measor and Woods' (1984) analysis is that it is less a self-fulfilling prophecy, (differentiation followed by polarisation), than how it operates within pupil cultures.

Measor and Woods (1984) placed a new emphasis upon pupils' own peer cultures at transition; but to what extent are pupils *given* a part or free to *select* their role? For example, their analysis simultaneously celebrates pupils' agency whilst describing constraints in roles (i.e. co-operation groups). The relationship between school-based differentiation and pupil-pupil differentiation is not fully explored. However, their analysis of myths, for example, conceptually linked the informal and formal aspects of the school. For example, the headteacher sets his own style through the ethos of the school and the manner in which he conveys a sense of 'the way we do things here' (Measor and Woods 1984:29). Measor and Woods' (1984) therefore put the organisational 'underlife' of the school, and the way pupils themselves create and maintain their own hierarchies, on the same level of importance as formal institutional structures, such as corporal punishment.

Measor and Woods' (1984) tackled many of the same tensions that concern differentiation-polarisation theory. The theory emphasises formal aspects (setting, streaming, banding), Measor and Woods (1984) contribute to the development of differentiation-polarisation theory by highlighting the previously assumed role of

pupils in their differentiation, rather than the *post hoc* change in pupil friendship networks which follow pupils' organisation into streams or sets. Whilst Measor and Woods' (1984) did not formally discuss the theory (beyond reference to Hargreaves, Lacey, Ball and Lambart's studies), their research contributes to understanding the 'character' of the school, its organisational 'underlife' and pupils' capacities to make their own space inside the institution.

Nicholls and Gardner (1999) offer another analysis of school transfers – and a complete contrast to Measor and Woods (1984). The differences between the two approaches are useful, less for developing differentiation-polarisation theory, *per se*, than to understand the radically different environment of the modern, nineteen-nineties school to the late nineteen sixties. The climate of 1974 in which Quine casually observed pupils were not regularly caned, is now one employing a radically different terminology – of parental choice, pupil rights and a currency of consumerism.

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball and Measor and Woods' (1984) work is firmly within the Sociology of Education, Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) study evaluates policy implementation at the local level. The latter concentrate upon curriculum continuity, moving away from a pupil-centred definition, towards the logistical organisation of transfer. The key issue in transition is the maintenance of continuity in the dissemination of knowledge across schools, rather than the impact of transfer upon pupil identities. Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) audience is schools, teachers and parents, rather than the sociological community.

Nicholls and Gardner (1999) demonstrate an ‘instrumentalist’ approach to how best continuity and progression may be “realized in the reality of today’s schooling” (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:5). Their language enters into a terminology of practicability – “main stakeholders,” “transition audit,” “good practice,” “collaborative networks for continuity” and “school managers” (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:2, 12). Through the course of the book, they advocate primary and secondary schools working “together to ensure smooth transitions in the more affective dimensions of the change (easing pupils’ and parents’ worries, etc.) as well as in the technical aspects of the changeover (progress information, continuity, etc.)” (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:8). The definition of a successful transition is one where the delivery of the curriculum is unbroken and without cause for regression.

Nicholls and Gardner’s (1999) rhetoric is one of pupil entitlement and “meeting the needs of pupils” (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:11). However, this is only understood in terms of the curriculum, despite their identification of the ‘affective dimensions’ within transition. Following their concern with all things curricular, Nicholls and Gardner then identify that “clearly the most important people in the transition [...] are those teachers who guide the pupils through their last year of Key Stage 2 and those who welcome them into the first year of Key Stage 3” (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:8). It is the teachers who are the main focus of the analysis, rather than the pupils.

Nicholls and Gardner’s (1999) conclusions for curriculum continuity revolve around heightening the sense of professional collaboration and the reduction of “phase conflict” between Year 6 and 7 staff (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:6).

Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) concentration upon the curriculum is not erroneous, but reflects a new structuring of the education system, introduced in the far-reaching reform of education introduced with the 1988 Education (Baker) Reform Act. The 1988 Act introduced the concept of a National Curriculum, which defined pupils' education into a series of 'Key Stages,' each with their own learning targets upon which pupils are assessed. In the context of Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) research, transition between key stages two and three is further complicated by the move from primary to secondary school. They operate within the framework of the logic of development within the National Curriculum and consider some of the bureaucratic complexities of the application of a national framework, as it operates at the local level. For example, issues of standardisation of key stage attainments (is a primary school's level four the same as the secondary school's perception of level four?).

Nicholls and Gardner (1999), somewhat disappointingly, do not introduce new research findings. However, they extensively quote from another study, in which Gardner had been involved (Sutherland *et al* 1996). Sutherland *et al's* (1996) research was interview and documentary based and "covered eight clusters of secondary-level schools and their feeder primaries in Northern Ireland" where, aside from some minor differences in terminology, the national curriculum was "almost identical in structure and content" (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:30). Sutherland *et al* (1996) had individually interviewed sixty-two teachers and Heads of Departments and forty-six pupils, in groups of between four and six. The only data set used in any great detail by Nicholls and Gardner (1999) is the staff interviews. Indeed, it is not until chapter four that Nicholls and Gardner consider the pupils' perspectives and

even at this point, pupils appear in the form of paraphrased or anecdotal summaries of their concerns or reactions at transition.

The emphasis on staff perspectives in the methodology is reflected in Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) conclusions. The book progressively develops a 'transition audit' for use by schools. The model assesses existing arrangements, identifying key personnel in the transition context and, from there, the "areas for change and/ or improvement" (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:11). Ironically, the only point at which Nicholls and Gardner come close to discussing the social and emotive aspects of schooling related to "professional mistrust" (Nicholls and Gardner 1999:6):

The existence of mistrust or lack of respect for one another's judgement is a major factor in promoting discontinuity in the transition from primary to secondary school. For the most part it is the secondary teachers, primarily in Year 7 [the intake year], that are perceived to ignore or disparage Year 6 work.
(Nicholls and Gardner 1999:6)

The authors identify here the importance of the social actors engaged in the local implementation of national policy, yet Nicholls and Gardner (1999) remain on a different level of engagement to that of Measor and Woods (1984). For the former, DES, DfEE NFER HMSO and Scottish Office publications form their surrounding literature. For the latter, the interactionist literature and Schutz, Mead and Goffman are the key conceptual models.

The distinctions between the two are not simply to say one is inductive, the other evaluative. Rather, it is to demonstrate how differently the systems of the school can be defined, problematised and studied. Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) general advocacy of a national curriculum is clear. All the more surprising is the onus placed by their conclusions upon the individual school for the improvement of transition.

This reflects some of the key tensions and contradictions of the 1988 Education Act – a *centrally* defined curriculum in a climate of schools as *individual* ‘companies,’ marketed and assessed through league tables, open-enrolment and OFSTED.

The diagnostic tools Nicholls and Gardner (1999) apply into the school, nevertheless, are problematic in their inherent limitations. This is not immediately problematic, for their objectives were different at outset to the approach of Measor and Woods (1984), and hence cannot be revaluated under different concerns. In their own terms, their research is exceptionally valid. Nicholls and Gardner (1999) attempt and succeed in offering an evaluative, trouble-shooting, study in which they act effectively as ‘management consultants.’ Yet their ability to diagnose the systems of schooling remains restricted to that level – they stress curriculum *continuity*, rather than critiquing the *content* of that curriculum. The implication is that Nicholls and Gardner (1999) evoke some of Hammersley (1985) and Ball’s (1995) concern, for the neglect of theory within recent Sociology of Education research:

The point is that the idea that human sciences like educational studies stand outside or above the political agenda of the management of the population, or somehow have a neutral status embodied in a free-floating progressive rationalism, are dangerous and debilitating conceits.

(Ball 1995:263)

There is the danger, as Ball (1995) voices, that educational research takes too much for granted, and as a result, loses its critical edge:

I wish to argue that the absence of theory leaves the researcher prey to unexamined, unreflexive preconceptions and dangerously naïve ontological and epistemological *a prioris*. I shall wail and curse at the absence of theory and argue for theory as a way of saving educational studies from itself.

(Ball 1995:265-6)

The call Ball (1995) makes a powerful case towards, is for theory. The role of theory, under Ball's (1995) line of argument is as an intellectual weapon to challenge the taken-for-granted. Theory acts:

to explore an aspect of educational study and educational research by employing a different theoretical language and theoretical perspective, to focus upon unintended and overlooked consequences, so as to render our practice critically problematic.

(Ball 1995:262)

The exception, Ball is also at pains to point out, is the use of theory merely as a comforting model in an increasingly slippery world. Theory, in this sense, acts as a "mantric reaffirmation of belief rather than a tool for exploration and for thinking otherwise" (Ball 1995:268). In the terms laid down by Ball, differentiation-polarisation theory is still relevant to modern schooling – if only to challenge the dominant metaphor of consumerism. It complements Measor and Woods' (1984) concern with identity and avoids the risk of failing to draw upon theoretical resources and superficial, surface-level analysis.

Measor and Woods (1984) and Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) work, in their different ways, indicate a new methodological approach is needed in order to position pupils more centrally for the following chapter's 'testing' of the differentiation-polarisation thesis. Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball assumed teacher identities in their respective case study schools. What alternative roles are available for the researcher in school, which offer better access to pupil-pupil interaction than Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball achieved?

Methodological innovations and the study of pupils' subjective experiences.

Llewellyn (1980).

Llewellyn (1980) positioned her research in the 'new' Sociology of Education, but with a further agenda to address the neglected category of gender in girls' experience of schooling. The context of the timing of her research within the sub-discipline of the Sociology of Education, as similar to that of Ball's (1981), and the prominence placed on studying gender (Delamont 2000), present important additions for the aim of the thesis to further develop Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work. Llewellyn (1980) attempted to gain a close, interactional relationship with pupils. "I wanted to enter the field as 'one of the girls'" (Llewellyn 1980:44). Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball, as teachers, were limited by the type of activities in which they could participate with pupils, whereas Llewellyn (1980) describes "I was involved in every aspect of school life with the girls," from classroom participation to "quick fags in the lavvies" (Llewellyn 1980:44). Llewellyn's (1980) data therefore included rich interactional resources, such as daily journal notes she made, recordings of informal conversations and interviews (with pupils and staff), one-week diaries by all of the girls and two detailed questionnaires as well as engaging in girls' lives outside school:

from reading magazines, listening to records and chatting in bedrooms; to evangelical church services and coffee evenings; and hanging around the streets of the estate, and the occasional fair.

(Llewellyn 1980:44)

Llewellyn's (1980) case study therefore involved a completely different level of personability in the field, compared to Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. However, the size of Llewellyn's (1980) sample belies the extent to which she achieved a close relationship with all pupils. Her research covered two girls' schools (a grammar and a secondary modern) and there were two hundred and thirty pupils in the year group she was studying (one cohort across their 4th and 5th years). The sample consisted of ten

different form groups. Llewellyn (1980) noted cliques developed at both schools, but her claim that she gained the same level of contact and access to all social groups seems unfeasible, even when her research was conducted over a number of years.

When noting the polarity between girls' friendship groups, how can she simultaneously be 'one of the girls' in both groups? The methodological move to identify more closely with pupils therefore contains its own complications of perceived complicity with one social group, over another.

Llewellyn (1980) implicitly claims being the same gender as the pupils she studied facilitates access. Is it methodologically possible to research and establish an equally close research relationship with both genders? As Ball (1993) argues, the "researcher may be 'in' a group, but yet can be a 'peripheral, active, or complete' member (Ball 1993:39-40)? Llewellyn (1980) does not comment on "the partiality of data coverage" or that her analysis may suffer from "an over reliance on data from some people, places or times" (Ball 1993:40). For example, her study critiques Hargreaves' (1967) and Lacey's (1970) analyses of schooling which omits the importance of gender, yet she omits the boys, albeit wittingly. Her study succeeds in a greater level of engagement with pupils, but raises as many questions for future research as it answers.

Llewellyn's (1980) findings not only raise methodological lessons on how to access pupils' lives for a future study of differentiation-polarisation theory but also issues for the development of the theory itself. Llewellyn (1980) successfully makes a case for the inclusion of gender, as well as social class and race in school studies. What happens to girls "is determined within certain boundaries by the very fact of their

being girls, and not only by their being pupils or working class or academically successful” (Llewellyn 1980:45). Her findings concur that pupils’ friendship patterns act as an important source of polarisation, for example, stereotypes of the top and bottom streams in the secondary modern not only worked around intelligence but also “notions of gender and of appropriate feminine behaviour” (Llewellyn 1980:46). Whilst her research does not contribute towards the identification of the original sources of differentiation received, as her study focused on the final years of pupils’ school careers, it serves to introduce the concept of gender which is essential, in the light of its neglect by Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. However, whether Llewellyn (1980) succeeded in overcoming the researcher-researched division, which can be particularly acute in school studies where the population is considerably younger than the researchers, is debatable.

The sociology of childhood.

The sociology of childhood attempts to radically re-conceptualise the status of the child in modern society. The ‘new’ sociology of childhood is characterised by differing perspectives on how best to both represent and explore children’s lives. The parallel with the thesis, is a mutual concern to link theory with method. The ‘new’ sociology of childhood is as much a debate about theory, as a methodological exploration and challenge (James and Prout 1997, Pole, Mizen and Bolton 1999). The sociology of childhood seeks to redress the omissions and assumptions within sociology, much in the same manner as the Manchester Project’s address of gaps within 1970s Sociology of Education. James and Prout (1997) identify the modern debate on childhood stems from French historian Aries’ (1962) observations of the ‘invented’ condition of childhood. Aries (1962) suggested childhood in reality is

historically and culturally relative. The 'new' sociology of childhood sets the task to challenge the 'quarantining' of childhood and explore the social construction of childhood in modern social relations:

children must be seen as actively involved in their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. They can no longer be regarded as simply the passive subjects of structural determinations.

(James and Prout 1997:4)

Advocates such as James and Prout (1997) argue the child in (post)modern society warrants a more active conceptual model, both as agent and economic consumer.

Their argument contrasts with existing work on children, which rests upon a linear, socialisation model of the child. For example, youth studies concentrate upon sub-cultural group formation and activities (Cohen 1973) to the neglect of individual agency. The sociology of childhood, within James and Prout's (1997) model, argues the child should not be perceived along the lines of a 'deficit model adult' in a process of becoming but rather a being in their own right.

There are parallels with differentiation-polarisation theory, without attempting to suggest the Sociology of Education and sociology of childhood are comparable. Is differentiation-polarisation theory guilty of an overly socialised model of the child? If differentiation-polarisation theory remains concerned with the impact of external constraints of pupils' experience of schooling, can there even be scope for pupils to express their own agency in the confines of the current schooling system?

In addition to theoretical questions, the sociology of childhood also presents a new methodological challenge. James and Prout (1997) find ethnography to be the most appropriate form through which to attempt to 'give voice' to children, yet can the social worlds and perspectives of children be accessed, particularly when social

research tends to be conducted by adults, with children taking the role of researched objects? For example, Clifford Shaw's (1930) Chicago School study *The Jack Roller* was an account of one working class boy's life. The nineteen twenties study has been the subject of debate, as to whether it constituted an account of the boy's own life or an independent interpretation by Shaw, in which the adult speaks for the child.

The 'theoretical space' James and Prout (1997) argue childhood warrants has undeniably yet to be achieved to the same degree as class, race and gender. Indeed, even these latter concepts have needed reinforcement (Stanley and Wise 1983, 1993). The same has yet to be achieved for the sociology of childhood's re-conceptualised model of the child.

Conclusion.

Ideas for the development of differentiation-polarisation theory beyond Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's original idea of differentiation-polarisation theory have been pursued through the chapter. The overall objective of the thesis is to use differentiation-polarisation theory as a case study to examine how ethnography can inform and cumulatively develop theory. The concern to explore new areas, or develop aspects of the theory, is necessarily more proactive than tracing of differentiation-polarisation in the literature. Therefore, the chapter moved beyond studies that had explicitly referred to the theory, to draw in new studies that can actively contribute to the theory's future development.

Themes drawn from Abraham and Quine begin to hint at the informal, contingent aspects of a school's social system and how these also serve to structure pupils'

experience of schooling. It also moves towards a rounder definition of school as a social system in its own right. Not only are there the organisational aspects of the school to be considered (setting, streaming, mixed-ability) and the formal rules (uniform, attendance, punctuality) but the character of an institution – its culture and ethos. Pupils encounter and draw upon both. This explores the school's organisation in a more complex way than purely their membership of a top or a bottom set or stream.

The concern with the *theoretical* expansion of differentiation-polarisation theory has been paralleled at every level with a concern that any developments remain grounded in field research – in preparation for chapter five's new ethnographic study of a nineteen nineties comprehensive. The methodological trends, and omissions, underpinning the generation of the theory were traced and critiqued. New research techniques and theoretical interests were adopted with the intent to provide avenues to further expand and complement the breadth of the differentiation-polarisation thesis.

The following research seeks to redress deterministic elements of differentiation-polarisation through a methodological approach that seeks to place more emphasis on the pupils' own interpretation and understanding of their lives. The fieldwork essentially seeks to evaluate the extent to which pupil agency is possible in school, balanced by the controlling forces which differentiation-polarisation theory identifies are present in the school as a social system. The thesis' fieldwork is school-based and therefore limited in its potential to see the 'whole' child, after schooling and into economic, work and family environments. Differentiation-polarisation theory holds that the internal organisation of the school shapes pupils' attitudes when they

experience the social system of the school which suggests the (adult) institution of the school is purely controlling for pupils and that there are no openings and potential for pupils to negotiate themselves within the school.

The new agenda for the theory is to explore the extent to which pupils are able to put up *fabrications*, which *successfully* defend them against the school. The metaphor is less of the consumer, than the strategic inmate – a role that avoids an over-socialised model of the pupil and explores the tensions between conflict and co-operation, particularly, within the microcosm of the form-group. The very possibility for pupils to ‘resist’ (cf. Willis 1977) and the methodological challenge to appreciate and access pupils’ own experiences is an ideal to take from the sociology of childhood’s literature to redress differentiation-polarisation theory’s objectification of the pupil. The research retains the sociology of childhood’s methodological suspicion that adult research’s can never fully access children’s lives.

The chapter has fully demonstrated, through discussing radically different conceptualisation of the school and the social actors contained within, the growing pluralism within the Sociology of Education. Sub-disciplines within the Sociology of Education on research areas such as school evaluation projects, school effectiveness studies and policy implementation studies have been interpreted as a loss of a sustained research programme and isolationism from the theoretical sensitivities of wider sociology (Hammersley 1985, Ball 1995). Whether a theoretical agenda can be clearly maintained in the field is the key question for the following chapter.

The form of development of differentiation-polarisation theory pursued across the chapter is one with which Hammersley would be unlikely to empathise and it is important to recognise that in pursuing one direction, alternative and potentially equally valid alternatives are not explored or rather, remain for future studies. The chapter concludes by offering a series of research questions for the original fieldwork's expansion and examination of differentiation-polarisation theory in a modern comprehensive school in England:

CONTEXT

1. an urban, mixed comprehensive.
2. the experiences of pupils from the point of their arrival in the school and to examine over some time their acclimatisation and familiarisation into the school.
3. a small cohort, using the school's organisation to guide this selection – i.e. following one social 'unit,' such as a form-group to study personal and peer dynamics of that microcosm within the system. The study is therefore less of a community than *a community within a community* (one form-group, within one year group, within the school population as a whole).

CONCERNS

1. The *point* at which pupils potentially adjust their attitude towards schooling (i.e. from transition). (Measor and Woods (1984) describe pupils' identity as highly fragile at transition. Does this imply pupils are particularly susceptible to differentiation at that point, when at another stage they may be more resistant?)

2. The *interactional level* and importance of peer subcultures and support inside the microcosm of the form-group. (Can differentiation take place *within* a form? Do pupil networks serve to sustain or resist differentiation?)
3. The *methodological* access and engagement with pupils' own subjective understanding of the rules and obligations they come face-to-face with inside the school and among their peers (i.e. in contrast to teacher-pupil and teacher-orientated studies). (Is it possible to come to understand the pupil perspective vis-à-vis schooling?)

CONTINUITIES WITH DIFFERENTIATION-POLARISATION THEORY:

1. Does the internal organisation of the school differentiate pupils?
2. What pupil attitude-change towards schooling takes place (if any)?
3. Does the schooling experience segregate pupils? Is this best understood in bi-polar terms?

CHAPTER 5. GOLDSWORTH COMPREHENSIVE.

An idea has to bear the weight of concrete experience or else it becomes a mere abstraction.

(Sennett 1998:11)

If one takes the image of the handyman, you go out with a pile of techniques in your mental suitcase, you don't know which one you're going to be able to use. You've no idea of the kind of situation.

(Parry, Atkinson and Delamont 1994:45)

Introduction. Thirty years on: differentiation-polarisation theory inside a modern comprehensive school.

The thesis employs differentiation-polarisation theory as a vehicle to explore the theory-method relationship in ethnography. This chapter discusses the results of *new* ethnographic fieldwork, which 'tested' differentiation-polarisation theory in a contemporary school. For example, is there evidence of differentiation in a modern comprehensive? If so, is a corresponding polarising effect produced?

The new fieldwork's objective was not to re-create Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's studies in a contemporary setting, but to develop the concept of differentiation-polarisation theory. This aim to develop theory distinguishes the new fieldwork from other ethnographies, such as policy-evaluation or open-ended ethnographic studies. Whilst of course there are other studies trying to develop different theories, the aim here is to make a wider point about the potential ethnography holds for theorising and vice-versa. The new research combines and, indeed, is dependent upon both theory and ethnography by seeking to confirm the presence of differentiation-polarisation and also use ethnography to expand the theory further.

Differentiation-polarisation theory was the product of Hargreaves and Lacey's analysis of the tripartite system in the nineteen sixties. Ball's fieldwork, in the late seventies, evaluated the comprehensive system moving to replace the tripartite. Thirty years on, the educational landscape has been transformed. The once radical image of the comprehensive school has become mainstream.¹⁹ Differentiation-polarisation theory offers a historical perspective and therefore critical weapon – to render the now familiar image of the comprehensive strange and to ask if the comprehensive system, in its maturity, is so different to the system that it replaced.

Research strategies: defining a research role.

The previous chapter moved differentiation-polarisation theory into a contemporary context through a consideration of the innovations during the thirty years following Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) research and the twenty years after Ball's (1981). The chapter argued there was room to explore *pupils'* roles inside the differentiation process, which continues a line of argument present in the original studies and also Lambart's (1976, 1982) work.²⁰ Whilst I sought to retain many of the characteristics of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's works in my own fieldwork, Hargreaves, Lacey, Ball and Lambart had all elected to teach in their respective schools²¹, whereas I could not as I did not possess the necessary qualifications to teach

19 The radicalism of the comprehensive initiative is revealed in the reactions of staff at Ball's case study school, when they questioned the feasibility of mixed-ability teaching and its egalitarian objectives. Llewellyn (1980) also notes resistance to comprehensivisation both inside grammar and secondary modern school systems. Indeed, perhaps the criticisms levelled at comprehensive education have never been overcome, as Boaler (1997) notes the return of setting policies.

20 For example, Hargreaves and Lacey moved into new ground by defining the school as a social system. Ball developed this by exploring issues of micro-political conflict within the school and Lambart engaged with micro-level, peer networks.

21 Lacey (1976) and Hargreaves (1967) reflected upon the implications teaching held for their data. Hargreaves included an extended discussion in an appendix (Hargreaves 1967), however, Lacey (1971) offered greater depth. For example, he described one incident when he used information he had gathered

in a secondary school. However, my analysis of differentiation-polarisation theory had created a new challenge, namely, to engage with pupils' school lives to a greater degree than the earlier studies had achieved. I believed the authoritative overtones of researcher-as-teacher would restrict my research role in my case study school and therefore the data I would be able to collect. In my research role I sought to achieve the status of a critical insider in the school. Towards this end, I followed three, closely connected strategies.

My immediate strategy involved my participation in the classroom. I followed a role of a 'neutral' observer, during which I observed pupils' interactions firsthand, but avoided taking an active role in their lessons. For example, in the earliest stages of the fieldwork, I sat, observing and taking notes at the back of the classroom. In school research, where lessons often involve written tasks, note-taking is a less conspicuous activity than in other situations. Later in the year, I progressively became more involved in lessons, in such roles as umpiring in P.E. and Games, helping pupils with textile and artwork and during science practicals. The regular presence of a teaching assistant also meant I was not the only adult inside the group besides their teacher.

The second strategy addressed how adults can engage in child research. Epstein (1998) acknowledges the status of adult in educational research is unavoidable, as age and size act as informal hierarchies in wider society and particularly schools:

through the fieldwork to support a pupil whose position in a stream was under question. However, in the case of a pupil in a similar situation, Lacey later took a more distanced role.

Those adults who are regularly present in schools often (usually? Nearly always?) insert themselves, or are positioned, within the discourses through which this space is organised – as instructors, demonstrators, discipliners, carers, first aiders, comforters, substitute mothers. As a researcher one can resist these discourses but it is impossible to refuse them completely or to step right outside of them, partly because the expectations of both children and others adults are so strongly organized through the discourses of adult-as-teacher.

(Epstein 1998:30)

The focus of the new research, onto a cohort of pupils entering secondary comprehensive education, therefore pronounced my adult status. For example, Llewellyn (1980) and Delamont (1984) had also adopted non-teaching research roles, but had researched older pupils.²² Yet at the same time, my non-teaching status within the school attracted a certain ambiguity and many questions. The pupils attempted to position me within the hierarchies of the school, for example, by asking whether I was an ex-Goldsworth student, a trainee teacher or a teaching assistant. These revealed the adult roles pupils were accustomed to in school, other than their regular teaching staff. In reply, I attempted to distance myself from a formal, authoritarian role, by replying that I was, like them, a student, but at a local university. (Pupils tended to be more curious about university life than the nature of the research.) I was attempting to establish my responsibilities within the school were not those of a member of staff and in terms of my visibility around the school, I was distanced from the teaching staff. The research was structured around shadowing pupils, rather than staff or ensuring an equal spread of academic subjects. I did not, as Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball had done, engage in staffroom cultures. I only used the staffroom to write-up field and interview notes and to arrange interview times with staff and I did not take up opportunities to socialise with staff outside school. The

22 Llewellyn (1980) describes informal situations she was able to share with pupils included smoking in the school lavatories, whilst Delamont (1984) was able to conduct many of her interviews in a friend's flat near the school.

ambiguities of my non-teaching role therefore offered some freedoms within the discourses Epstein (1998) outlines, and I pursued these to the extent it was possible in researching a young cohort inside the strictures of a school's hierarchies.

The third strategy I adopted was that of a 'curious friend,' echoing Epstein's (1998) notion of a 'least adult role.' The research asked the perennial interactionist question 'what is happening here?' and attempted to engage with the actors' own definitions of the situation. In becoming a critical insider, I sought to observe not only what pupils were doing but also an insight into their thoughts and feelings. This invites a multiplicity of perspectives, those of teacher and pupil *and* differing views amongst the pupils. For example, I followed a policy of "selective disattention" towards pupils' rule-breaking activities (Goffman 1974:207). Selective disattention allowed pupils to realise that, whilst I was studying their behaviour, I was not interested in controlling it. The difference is best emphasised by the differences between my role and that of a teaching assistant in the classes I attended. Our participation in the classroom was largely similar, helping pupils with their tasks, yet our relationship with pupils was quite different. My obligations lay with the pupils, whereas hers were as a member of teaching staff. The data I gathered rested on such policies as selective disattention and in an incident later in the year, when she sought information from me about some of the pupils, I remained mindful of their confidences.

The case study school.

Goldsworth (a pseudonym) Comprehensive was an edge-of-town, LEA maintained, non-denominational, mixed comprehensive school in central England. Goldsworth presented an ideal case study school for a number of reasons. I sought a 'typical' comprehensive whilst, of course, recognising that every school possesses its own,

unique character. For example, whilst Delamont (1984) selected an independent, all-girls school in order to contrast the schools studied by Lacey and Hargreaves, I sought to find the dominant form of State school as it existed thirty years after the original studies. Goldsworth Comprehensive matched these requirements, in that it was a State-sector school, but had not opted out of LEA control by becoming a grant maintained school nor become a specialist school. Goldsworth School was mixed and the size of the school population was comparable Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's case study schools, indeed, this was a point on which a number of other schools were rejected. Goldsworth's location, neither in the heart of a large town nor in a rural area and this again matched my concern to identify a school with similar characteristics to those of the original studies. Geographically, I was restricted to a school within commuting distance from my university, as unlike Lacey I did not take up residence near the school. I was also aware that colleagues in my department were already conducting research in local schools and avoided these sites.

My final consideration was that the school be a well-established comprehensive, that is, one that had operated its current system of grouping its pupils (whether that be mixed-ability, banding or setting) for several years. Therefore I would not capture a school system acclimatising to change as Ball (1981) had done, but a system firmly in place.

Access to Goldsworth School was negotiated initially through the headteacher. Following a meeting with him to discuss the requirements and nature of my research, I was permitted free access throughout the school site. All adults on site, from teaching staff to administrators, were required to wear an identification badge.

Whereas permanent members of staff's badges displayed their name and photograph, I was given the generic staff member's badge worn by visiting teachers and P.G.C.E. students. Whilst I was initially concerned that this identified me more readily as a member of teaching staff, it did so less than the day visitor passes I was later to see around the school.

In my negotiations with the headteacher prior to the beginning of the fieldwork, I remained mindful of Delamont's (1992) assertion that access remains an important issue throughout ethnographic research, rather than merely at its outset. Therefore, before every lesson I attended (either as a participant or an observer) I asked the permission of the teacher to their classroom. On no occasion was this refused. (Though when the class were taking examinations, several teachers suggested with all kindness that there might be little to observe!)

The character of Goldsworth.

Historically, the school had been three separate institutions: a secondary modern, girls' grammar and boys' grammar. Llewellyn's (1980) study of a grammar and secondary modern found the two schools neighboured one another and this was also the case at Goldsworth. Two of Goldsworth's sites, Upper and Lower School (as they were known within the school), housed the 11-16 year old cohort. The third site approximately a mile away housed the Sixth Form. In the academic year of 1996, the school's population exceeded thirteen hundred pupils, including the Sixth Form, and they employed 88 specialist teaching staff, 32 specialist support staff.

The definition of the comprehensive school Goldsworth's headteacher visualised was one which was not selective, was mixed, non-denominational and generally a school in which "the microcosm naturally mirrors the macrocosm" of the surrounding community (Headteacher Interview):

I think I was appointed because they really wanted the school to be one, true comprehensive school. When I say 'they,' I mean the governors. With us being a split site school, a three-way split site school there was a feeling that there was no unity in the school. The Sixth Form was virtually independent. [...] I was already a comprehensive, a community school head in [a nearby city], so I think in a sense they thought they'd found what they were looking for in me because I was already a head, I was definitely a comprehensive school animal and I was absolutely intent on producing a comprehensive school, an excellent comprehensive school, feeling here.

(Headteacher Interview)

In the context of the late nineteen nineties, Goldsworth had long been a comprehensive, in its constituents and from the vision by its headteacher, but had inherited a degree of physical separatism from the tripartite system.

The research sample.

The fieldwork concentrated upon pupils' experiences as they enter and adjust to a new school. State education in England and Wales at the time of the research divided compulsory schooling in two, primary (5-11) and secondary (11-16), although some variations remained between LEAs and lower, middle and upper schools had different transfer points. In the context of Goldsworth's LEA, the transition point had been reduced, from thirteen (Year 9) to eleven (Year 7). In 1996, Goldsworth had received her first Year 7 intake and the following year marked the school's first year with its full, expanded 11-18 complement. This change was fortuitous for my own research, in that the intake year that I would be studying was of the same age as the pupils in the original studies. For example, if the

Ball's (1981) fieldwork captured Beachside Comprehensive in a process of change, namely comprehensivisation, and my fieldwork saw Goldsworth facing the pedagogic challenges of teaching a new Key Stage²³, the logistics of accommodating three hundred extra pupils on the main site (with the provision of only three, new classrooms) and providing the pastoral and tutorial support for two extra year-groups. One benefit from the change in the age of transition at Goldsworth for my research was that it facilitated access, as the school was keen to reflect upon their organisation of the change.

The intake year group and the research sample.

The intake year (Year 7) at Goldsworth was structured into ten, mixed-ability form-groups. The concept of 'mixed ability' at Goldsworth requires further definition. The Head of Year responsible for the new cohort constructed each form to contain a mix of abilities. The Head of Year 7 in interview revealed the process rested on a combination of formal and informal sources. He and the headteacher made a series of personal visits to each feeder school. The assessment of incoming pupils rested on standardised exam results administered at pupils' feeder schools (see Appendix I), information on statemented²⁴ pupils, reports by pupils' primary school teachers and an informal summary made by the pupils' form tutors (Head of Year 7 Interview). The logic underpinning Goldsworth's allocation process, as the Head of Year argued, was that a purely random system could unintentionally concentrate some abilities together

23 The curriculum, in England and Wales, is divided into 'Key Stages' or levels. At the end of each key stage, pupils sit a national test. The form-group researched here was entering Key Stage 3.

24 That is, pupils listed on a national (scaled) register as requiring special educational attention. The scale ranged from minor learning difficulties to pupils that necessitated teaching support in lessons (for example, as Teaching Assistant in the classroom). Goldsworth pupils reached across the range.

(Head of Year 7 Interview). The definition of comprehensive education at Goldsworth was therefore engineered. It constructed form-groups that reflected and facilitated contact across the abilities within the year – and immediately from their arrival to the school.

Nicholls and Gardner's (1999) analysis of Year 6 to 7 transition found feeder schools tended to over-estimate their pupils in the information they made available to secondary schools. Nicholls and Gardner also highlighted that no standardised procedure exists for the transition process. Indeed, at Goldsworth, the information held in the school office about each pupil, for the records of the form-group I studied,²⁵ their files varied considerably, some dating back to pupils' pre-school reports whilst others included only quite nominal information about pupils' examination grades. In the system in place at Goldsworth, there was considerable scope for less than tangible information to be passed on about pupils. This is demonstrated by another aspect of the allocation process the Head of Year described.

One of the arguments supporting comprehensivisation is it fosters contact between pupils of different backgrounds and abilities. The teaching and learning environment inside the comprehensive is importantly both academic and social. In the transition into senior school, the diversity of the student body is expanded and this was certainly the case as students moved into Goldsworth, where the student body was approximately thirteen hundred pupils. However, in the system in place at Goldsworth, the shift into an expanded pupil demographic is contained by how the school placed its new pupils into new form-groupings. The Head of Year explained

²⁵ I analysed one form-groups' files. This consisted of twenty-eight pupil, although two pupil's files were not available.

that the recommendations he gathered from feeder schools also included pupils' friendship groupings.

The Head of Year described how he worked the allocation process in two ways – to maintain positive friendship networks and to avoid ones that had concerned feeder schools. The feeder schools provided important information for, quite simply, “they would know who to keep together and who to keep apart” (Head of Year Interview). Ostensibly, maintaining pupils' friendship groupings was a form of social engineering, albeit phrased in terms of avoiding personality-based conflicts whilst retaining (where possible) positively perceived networks and associations. In overview, Goldsworth operated, less *academic* streaming, than ‘*co-operation group*’ streaming (to use Measor and Woods' 1984 term). This emerged to key a key factor within the research, and I moved to explore whether Goldsworth's system acted to remove the informal sources of intra-set differentiation-polarisation Abraham (1989) identified or whether it fostered new tensions within pupils' experiences.

Defining a sample: a common timetable.

The Year 7 timetable at Goldsworth re-enforced the form-group unit. Pupils remained in the same group for all of their lessons throughout Year 7. The only exceptions were non-core curriculum subjects such as craft, design and technology and games.²⁶ So, therefore, Goldsworth's definition of mixed-ability form-groups was maintained through the allocation of form-groups and the teaching timetable, as no streaming or setting took place. Therefore, Goldsworth School had no top, middle

²⁶ In these subjects, two Year 7 form-groups were mixed together, although not on the basis of academic ability.

or bottom sets to compare and contrast such as Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) found at Lumley Secondary Modern and Hightown Grammar). Indeed, even Ball (1981) had found Beachside Comprehensive contained two remedial form-groups inside each (purportedly) mixed-ability year.

Goldsworth's mixed-ability system for its intake year meant I could not contrast the experiences of different streams or bands. However, the questions arising from the analysis of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball and also Quine and Abraham's work remained relevant, perhaps even more so considering the lack of formal differentiation in Year 7. Goldsworth was an ideal site to challenge the potential influence of informal sources of differentiation. Quine also suggested that individual teachers held the potential to be autonomous within the system of a school. If the form-groups at Goldsworth stayed together across their timetable, what differences would emerge in their behaviour and relations with their different subject tutors? The core questions remained in place. Indeed, shadowing several form-groups was not essential in the way it had been for Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. In considering how *many* form-groups I should attempt to observe and my aim to pursue differentiation-polarisation theory on an interactional level, meant the more form-groups I shadowed, the less time I could spend with each group.

Geertz (1973), somewhat reassuringly in this context, observes all field research involves the suspicion, no matter what you are observing, something more interesting or important is happening somewhere else. The nature of the structure and teaching timetable for Year 7 at Goldsworth meant one form-group represented a microcosm of the year cohort: a community within a community. I therefore elected to shadow one

Year 7 form-group, 7C, from their first day to their last as Year 7 pupils. The '7' represented their current year of schooling and the 'C' the initial of their form tutor, rather than any rank or hierarchy.

The implications of selecting form 7C are impossible to fully calculate for, whilst all the form-groups in Year 7 were equal in the eyes of the school, this does not equate with the statement they were all the same. Each, of course, contained different students, with different backgrounds and abilities. The selection of 7C can be defended in terms of Goldsworth School's system of allocating pupils into form-groups before they arrived. That the school *considered* each group to be comparable with one another made each form-group as equally valid as one another for the purposes of my research. Therefore, one was selected on the grounds on gaining a *detailed* insight rather than a superficial coverage of two, or even all, of the Year 7 cohort.

The data set.

The different research role I adopted, in comparison to Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's, in turn constructed a different data set. For example, I was keen to avoid Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's reliance on non-observational data sources, such as sociomatrices and questionnaires. My new emphasis lay with gaining an insight into pupils' interpretations and interactional forms but at the outset of the research it was unclear what substantive sources of data would emerge to take their place. The data proved to be eclectic. It included official school documents (registers, school records and pupil reports), observation in and outside the classroom and pupils' reflective essays (such

as Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball had collected²⁷). I also included informal notes and jottings pupils made in class that I became privy to. Indeed, the relevance of pupils' notes and messages has been noted (Hey 1997). Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball paid little attention to pupils' dress (for example, adaptations and resistances to the school uniform). For my own records, I also kept a research and personal diary.

The core sources of data that emerged were the series of tape-recorded pupil interviews and my classroom observational work. The interviews borrowed from the observation data and vice-versa. I interviewed all of 7C twice, at the beginning and at the end of an academic year. I also interviewed their teaching staff, the Head of Year 7, the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator and Goldsworth's headteacher. All of the interviews were tape-recorded and adopted a semi-structured format. They took place in a variety of locations, but places were selected where we would not be disturbed. These included the canteen in Lower School during registration and P.S.E., the Head of Year 7's office and 7C's Drama classroom in breaktimes immediately following lessons. My interviews with member of staff also took place in private, either in their offices or empty classrooms we were able to use. My interviews with Goldsworth School's senior staff and 7C's form tutor took place early in the academic year and the rest of 7C's subject tutors were interviewed in the following months. No pupil or member of staff refused to be interviewed, although the use of registration a largely unpopular P.S.E. lessons as pupil interview times undoubtedly facilitated pupils' enthusiasm. It is also questionable, in the context of an adult-dominated institution, whether pupils felt fully able to refuse to be interviewed.

27 Pupils' different writing abilities made this problematic in terms of parity between essays. I therefore did not use pupil diaries to the same extent as Ball but found the discursive format of the interviews afforded pupils of all abilities better opportunity to express themselves.

Hargreaves (1967) argued he used every opportunity to engage and talk with pupils. I adopted this as a principle throughout my time in the field. I spent as much time as possible in the company of the pupils and it took me into more informal social settings than Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball report in their studies. I chatted with the pupils sitting out of games and P.E. lessons, visited the library with pupils at lunchtimes and went to their lunchtime football games. I ate with pupils, queued in the corridor with them before lessons and attended their assemblies. I got lost with the group in the first weeks, judged the Year 7 Talent Show and became swept up in the yo-yo craze of 1998. I played in their hockey and rounders games, attended the end-of-year Sports' Day and cheered them on in their Year Group rounders competition. I read their books and magazines, a pupils' private journal (when invited!), discussed their out-of-school hobbies and preoccupations and listened to the general gossip of the group. I held all of these as rich and potentially relevant sources of data.

I attended to the British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines throughout the research. For example, pseudonyms were used to disguise the identity of the school, its staff and individual pupils. Differentiation-polarisation theory allows the long-term implications of everyday actions inside schools to be seen in a stark, critical light. I was therefore extremely sensitive towards the impact of the types of exclusion I witnessed at Goldsworth School. I maintained and respected the confidentiality of all of the information pupils and their staffs provided, whether in interview or in the many informal conversations that took place.

The data was analysed according to the principles of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory, but taking differentiation and polarization as 'sensitising concepts' at the beginning of the research.

Three research phases.

The fieldwork followed the school year September 1997 to July 1998. One year in the field was less time than Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball had used to generate differentiation-polarisation theory, but longer than Abraham (1989) used in his defence of the theory. My concern with such a small, ethnographic sample group was to maintain my sense of analytic distance throughout the year and to use the year to best effect. To avoid over familiarisation or 'going native,' such as on the occasion I almost mindless followed two of 7C's boys into the men's toilet as we travelled between lessons, I further structured the year into three. Different phases of data collection would permit the strange to become familiar and the familiar strange once again – and most importantly allow for changes between the different periods to become most visible.

The three phases attended to the pattern of the school year, using the Christmas and Easter vacations. Phase One began on the first day of term until the Christmas break. Phase Two ran from mid-January to early March and the final phase during July up to the last day of the school year. The three phases of research structured my time in the school into distinct segments. In total, I was in the school during eighteen weeks of the school year, sat in over one hundred and fifty lessons, interviewed all of the pupils in 7C twice and all of their senior and core teaching staff. The results rest upon these and all of the subtle experiences and encounters that define ethnographic work.

RESULTS.

PHASE 1: Short-term transition: opening definitions and norms.

The beginning of a new academic year renders many forms and structures of a school visible for the benefit of new members. The same forms later disappear under an expectation they are learnt and require no repetition. The first few weeks of the school year at Goldsworth offered the new intake year definitions of pro-school, rule-following behavioural norms. Three processes pupils encountered in their early days at Goldsworth are now considered; school assemblies, the school's written code of conduct and, finally, inside the classroom.

The academic year for the new Year 7 started one day before the rest of the school returned. Year 7 attended a half-day and on arrival they were ushered into an assembly in the Lower School hall. A year group assembly was to be the largest group in which pupils met, as neither of the main sites' two halls could comfortably accommodate a larger group.

The first day's assembly was led the headteacher, the Head of Year 7 and the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator and disseminated a series of formal rules and expectations. The tone was positive and welcoming (Fieldnotes). For example, the assembly addressed pupils' transition anxieties by outlining the school's pastoral system, clearly identifying the Year 7 support staff and where their offices were in Lower School (Fieldnotes). The assembly projected a tone of reassurance and alleviated pupils' apprehensions by stressing that pupils should draw problems to the attention of members of staff, that pupils' problems would be taken seriously and appropriate

action would be taken (Fieldnotes). This information was reinforced by the presence of the school's senior staff, whereas the Head of Year, the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator or the deputy headteacher, led later assemblies.

The school's welcome can be placed into a wider context. The character of the education system in England and Wales in the late nineteen nineties is that of a quasi-market. Stronach (1999) observes, "league tables [...] are a form of contemporary 'spectacle'. They are our Olympic Games" (Stronach 1999:173). Mechanisms, such as school league tables, Key Stage achievement criteria, OFSTED inspections and government policies such as open enrolment, place Goldsworth in visible competition with other schools. In the school league tables, Goldsworth's GCSE results had been below both the national and LEA averages for the past five years and, perhaps more significantly, below those of the comprehensive across town. In 1997, Goldsworth's intake was to capacity and in that sense the school's income level (as defined per pupil) was not threatened. However, the assembly can on one level been seen to reinforce pupils' (and their parents') selection of Goldsworth School and to retain this intake population. Indeed, the discussions I later had with senior staff revealed a concern to retain the pupils the school attracted.²⁸

The first day's assembly provided new pupils with formal information about the organisation of the school and in doing so also began to reveal its character and ethos. Abraham (1989) described the headteacher's drive towards academic achievement had created a pressured, academically orientated environment inside the school. In

²⁸ Goldsworth monitored the *expected* intake and those pupils who failed to materialise at the beginning of the school year. For example, the Key Stage Co-ordinator visited each form-group following the opening assembly in turn, on one level checking pupils had made their way to the right form-group but also collating whether applications to the school were matched by arrivals in September.

contrast, Goldsworth's headteacher and the Head of Year 7's delivered talks emphasising tolerance, consideration and respect for others' life experiences and different backgrounds (Fieldnotes). These talks began to prime pupils that Goldsworth contained a diverse population. Indeed, Goldsworth's intake included both the most deprived areas of the town and its surrounding communities and also established, middle-class neighbourhoods. One member of staff estimated in interview that every form-group at Goldsworth contained five statemented pupils (Staff Interviews). Therefore, Goldsworth School's catchment reflected the social class diversity of the town and its surrounding area, whereas Lacey's Hightown Grammar and Lambart's Mereside Grammar contained concentrations of middle class pupils.

The first day assembly's emphasis on tolerance and egalitarianism did not ignore themes of discipline and achievement. The *leitmotif* of the opening assembly was also the school prospectus's; that all "students strive to reach their full potential" (School Prospectus, 1997-8:3). The talks in the assembly by the senior staff associated success with happiness. For example, the Key Stage 3 co-ordinator welcomed pupils to "a long and successful career" and the headteacher wished pupils a "happy and successful" time at Goldsworth (Fieldnotes). One example immediately noted by the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator was Year 7's high standard of uniform, which he followed by stating it should be maintained (Fieldnotes). The opening assembly, in overview, provided pupils with formal information about the running of the school and also began to define the informal character of Goldsworth school life.

Pupils moving to their base form-group room followed the first day's assembly.

Returning to Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's concept of the school as a social system, this can be compared to a shift from the general to the specific, which understands that schools operate on a number of levels. The processes and interactions that occur *inside* a classroom are as important as the formal rules that define a school's organisational system. On a basic level, the classroom is where pupils spend the vast majority of their time in school and at Goldsworth School, the form-group was also the group in which they would be taught for the entire year.

7C's base classroom was where they registered in the morning, however, for the rest of the six-period day, they were taught throughout the school. Goldsworth economised between the two sites, for example, basing academic departments entirely on one site rather than replicating them at both. Therefore, Maths was only taught in the Maths Department in Upper School and English only in the English Department in Lower. This was important for the school's internal organisation as it intrinsically linked the sites. 7C's timetable is demonstration in point, as they were never taught on one site for the whole day.

Goldsworth's system of moving pupils to each subject department meant pupils now encountered a range of lessons in which each subject had a different member of teaching staff. This was a considerable shift from pupils' feeder school experiences, where pupils were largely taught by the same teacher and in the same classroom. Goldsworth therefore expanded pupils' curriculum but also introduced them to a new variety of teaching staff and their different pedagogic styles. The division of the National Curriculum (at the time of the research) between core and foundation

subjects entailed regular contact with English, Maths and Science teachers (three or four periods per week), whereas they met twice a week for History, Geography, Art, Technology and Music. Reaching across all of 7C's lessons was a generic set of rules known in Goldsworth as the "code of conduct" (see Appendix II).

Goldsworth had a written code of conduct, structured under four general headings which defined "how to behave" in school (Goldsworth Pupils' School Planner). The code was displayed throughout the school, from the noticeboards in the headteacher's office to 7C's Maths and Geography classrooms and also appeared in the school prospectus and the 'Planner' (diaries) issued to every Year 7-10 pupil. The code's over-arching set of behavioural expectations was personalised by different subject staff for their own subjects. In the first week of term, pupils copied the code for each subject into their exercise books (Fieldnotes). In Science lessons, the code covered the safe handling of equipment and experiment procedures (such as writing-up) and in Drama it emphasised the importance of teamwork and rewarding of effort (for example, through applause).

The code of conduct, and its translation from the school's generic code as represented in the school prospectus into individual subject lessons, characterised pupils' first few weeks in school. They contained a high degree of formal instruction:

Teacher lines them [7C] up in corridor, single-file outside. [They are told to] Take coats off before enter room. Stand behind chair. If hot, take jumper off, shirt in and tie done up, sleeves rolled down. Real emphasis on silence before they can sit down.

(Fieldnotes)

The interactional instructions pupils were given were extremely basic, for example, pupils were told to put their pens down when staff were giving instructions, to

underline titles and to use the other side of the paper if they ran out of room (Fieldnotes). This was the character of pupils' lessons in the first few weeks of the school year. However, as Pugsley *et al* (1996) recognise, in the immediate period of transition, pupils actively seek to blend into a school. That is, to acquire the appropriate behavioural norms of a social setting. The focus for my own research was to examine change inside a small cohort of pupils over a year and how the systems of school shaped their schooling experience. Pupils' narratives, in a written task entitled 'That First Day Feeling,' offered an insight into *pupils'* own concerns on entering Goldsworth.

Transition myths: expectations and realities.

In a mixed-ability year cohort, what barriers or difficulties did pupils anticipate in the first weeks at Goldsworth? Pupils' 'First Day Feeling' narratives revealed some of pupils' initial anxieties:

I was so nervous about moving around the school. A school that was three times bigger than my other school. I was worried about if Helen (my only friend in my class) went off and found someone else and left me out.

(Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essay)

I woke up in the morning feeling happy and excited about going to Goldsworth. I went into the kitchen and poured myself some cornflakes but I couldn't eat them with nervousness. Then I went upstairs to get dressed. I couldn't do my tie, but my dad could so that was okay.

(Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essay)

7C's 'First Day Feeling' essays revolved around getting lost, not knowing anyone, being 'picked on' and not being able to make any friends. However, pupils' feelings at transition were positive and negative. Pupils' described "feeling nervous and happy at the same time," expressed relief at escaping the boredom of the holidays and

excitement at the prospect of making new friends (Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essays). The move to "big school" was also a shift in status, which included a new uniform (for some, their first), studying new subjects and membership of senior school (Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essay). The first day at school immediately dissipated many of the central fears pupils held about secondary school:

It was not as bad as I thought though I've seen the big kids and there [sic] not so bad.

(Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essay)

The opening fears and apprehensions pupils revealed, when seen in the context of the running of the school, proved to be somewhat misleading. Two themes are now discussed in detail; the implications of split sites and the internal composition of form-group 7C.

The split site system.

Pupils' fears about the "big kids" combined with their new 'lowly' status in the school proved to be unfounded (Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essay, Pupil Interviews).

Goldsworth was, for the vast majority, far larger than pupils' previous schools.

However, the organisation of the school restricted any informal contact between the 11-18 cohorts. The Sixth Form were taught on the third site approximately a mile away (although I was informed some Sixth Form teaching did take place on the main site). On the main site, the 11-16 year old cohorts were separated during break and lunchtimes. Years 7-9 remained in Lower School and Years 10-11 at Upper, for example, the cafeterias on each site served these years and Year 11. Access to the school library (in Upper) was also timetabled according to year group. Pupils were also encouraged to arrive and leave from the school using the two sites' different entrances and teaching staff on duty monitored the division. Therefore, whilst Year

7's opening assembly emphasised the diversity of the school, contact was restricted among the full population of the school. The main instance 7C experienced the 'big kids' was between lessons, in the congestion at exits and entrances to the main buildings. In interview, 7C pupils complained less about the 'big kids' than the tiring effect of constantly moving between classrooms, such as when their timetable took them from the third floor in Lower to top floor in Upper.

The internal organisation of Goldsworth School therefore restricted pupil contact to those largely in the same stage of secondary schooling. However, inside form-groups, the school's mixed-ability group policy in Year 7 was designed for pupils to encounter the range of academic abilities within the school. Indeed, as discussed above, this was not left to chance in the allocation process, but form-groups were deliberately engineered. My research's focus on one form-group provided the opportunity to explore the implications of such a policy in detail.

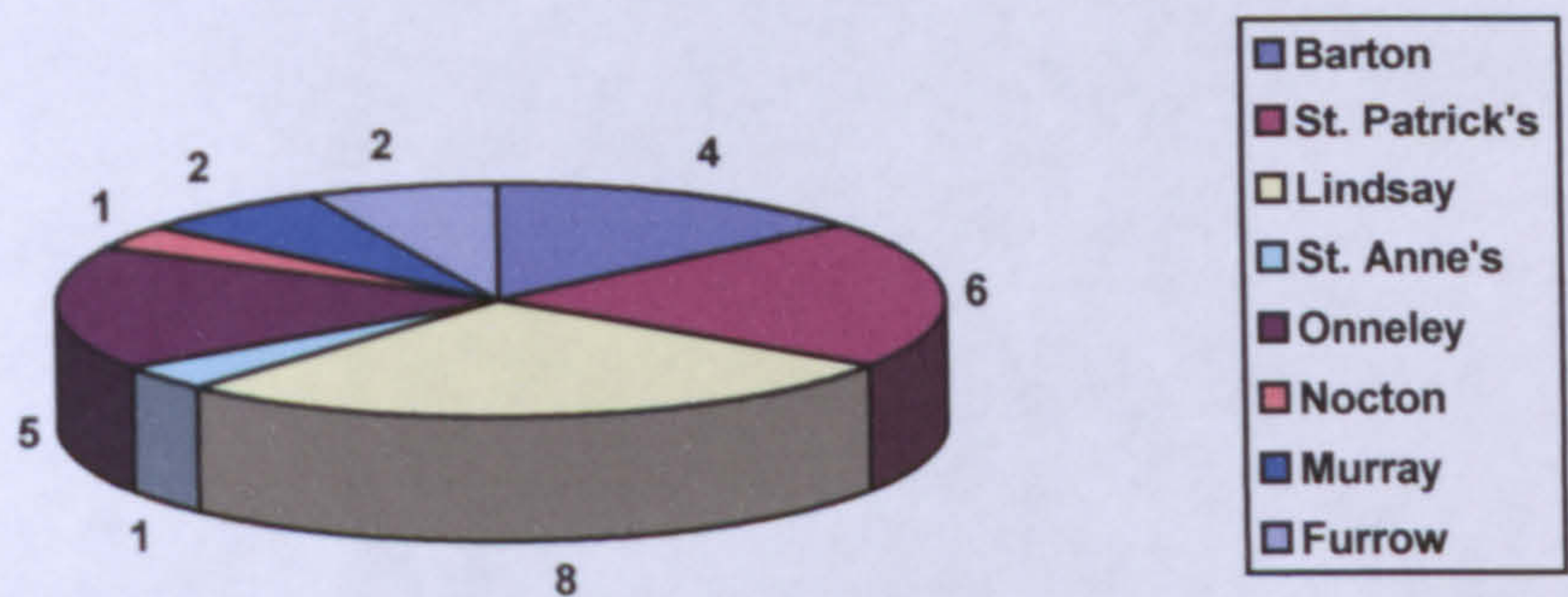
The composition of 7C.

One of the images of transition pupils held at the beginning of the year was the opportunity to make new friends and they stressed the importance of friends for "having a laugh" in school (Pupil Interviews and Pupil 'First Day Feeling' essays). In the context of 7C's common timetable, the pupils in 7C would be the main unit in which pupils would spend their first year at Goldsworth and therefore where they could continue or form new, sustained friendships.

The Head of Year 7 estimated Goldsworth drew from nineteen different feeder schools. The school's prospectus listed seven core feeder schools and fourteen

schools in the surrounding areas from which Goldsworth regularly drew its pupils. In September 1997, 7C consisted of twenty-eight pupils – sixteen boys and twelve girls. Figure 1 below details the different feeder school’s represented in 7C:

Fig. 2. Feeder school backgrounds inside 7C.



Five of the eight different feeder schools (Onneley Middle, St. Patrick’s CoE Combined, Lindsay Junior, Barton County Primary and Murray Combined) in 7C were within Goldsworth’s core of seven feeder schools and made up the vast majority (twenty-five) of 7C.

In accordance with the school’s mixed-ability teaching group policy in Year 7, 7C was designed to represent a range of academic abilities. In a standardised Year 7 Maths test, 7C’s marks ranged from ninety-three to sixteen (Fieldnotes) and 7C’s English teacher assessed the group as containing both advanced pupils with reading ages of sixteen and pupils with severe reading difficulties (Interview). Appendix I details the range of 7C pupils’ pre-arrival reading test scores (where available). From these accounts, 7C therefore represented, if not the range in the whole school, a diverse range of academic abilities.

The school's policy in allocating form-groups took friendship networks, as well as academic ability, into account. The Head of Year 7 explained feeder schools offered information about negative and positively perceived friendship groups which "where possible" was taken into account (Head of Year 7 Interview). I came to learn that 7C re-created one large friendship group from a feeder school. Whilst this was not problematic for pupils who arrived at Goldsworth knowing only one or two people in 7C, the size of the pre-existing friendship group held consequences that emerged later in the year.

Co-operation groups inside 7C.

The largest and most immediately identifiable friendship group was the group of boys transferring from Lindsay Junior. These boys sat in the same section of the classroom in lessons and selected from within their group in team activities (such as in drama, science experiments and games). A symbol of membership of the group was soft drink can-shaped pencil cases (Lucozade and Pepsi-Max), which the boys sat upright on their desks during lessons (Fieldnotes). Beyond the 'Pepsi-Max group,' the other large groups of pupils transferring from the same feeder schools (for example, 4, 5 or 6 pupils) contained both genders and, as the genders at this stage were self-segregating, contained smaller existing friendship groups. There were several pairs of friends transferring from their feeder school together into 7C. For example, two boys had shared not only the same class at feeder school but also since nursery school. The two pupils who transferred alone from their feeder school into 7C all had pupils from their feeder school in other Year 7 form-groups and one of these revealed she knew one of 7C from Brownies. Transition into Goldsworth and 7C was, therefore, not the gaping chasm of a break from feeder school some pupils had anticipated.

Pupils were free to choose *where* with *whom* they sat in class and this was used as an indicator of pupils' friendship networks. For example, the partner pupils chose in class, who they worked with in lessons and to whom they talked, whereas Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball used sociomatrix data to discover friendship networks and groupings. The figure below indicates some of the friendship networks carried into 7C from pupils' previous schools:

The layout of 7C's classroom at Goldsworth varied, but without exception and

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Fig. 3 7C form room seating plan, September 1997.

Classroom design varied but all joined two-seater tables together to form rows. The

All of the pupils' names have been changed and pseudonyms have been chosen that

reflect each pupils' ethnic origin. A number of pupils indicated a preference for a

particular pseudonym and this has been accommodated if possible. *Italics* indicate

membership of the 'Pepsi-Max' group from the same feeder school. (Brackets) are

pairings carried from feeder schools. (Brackets) are

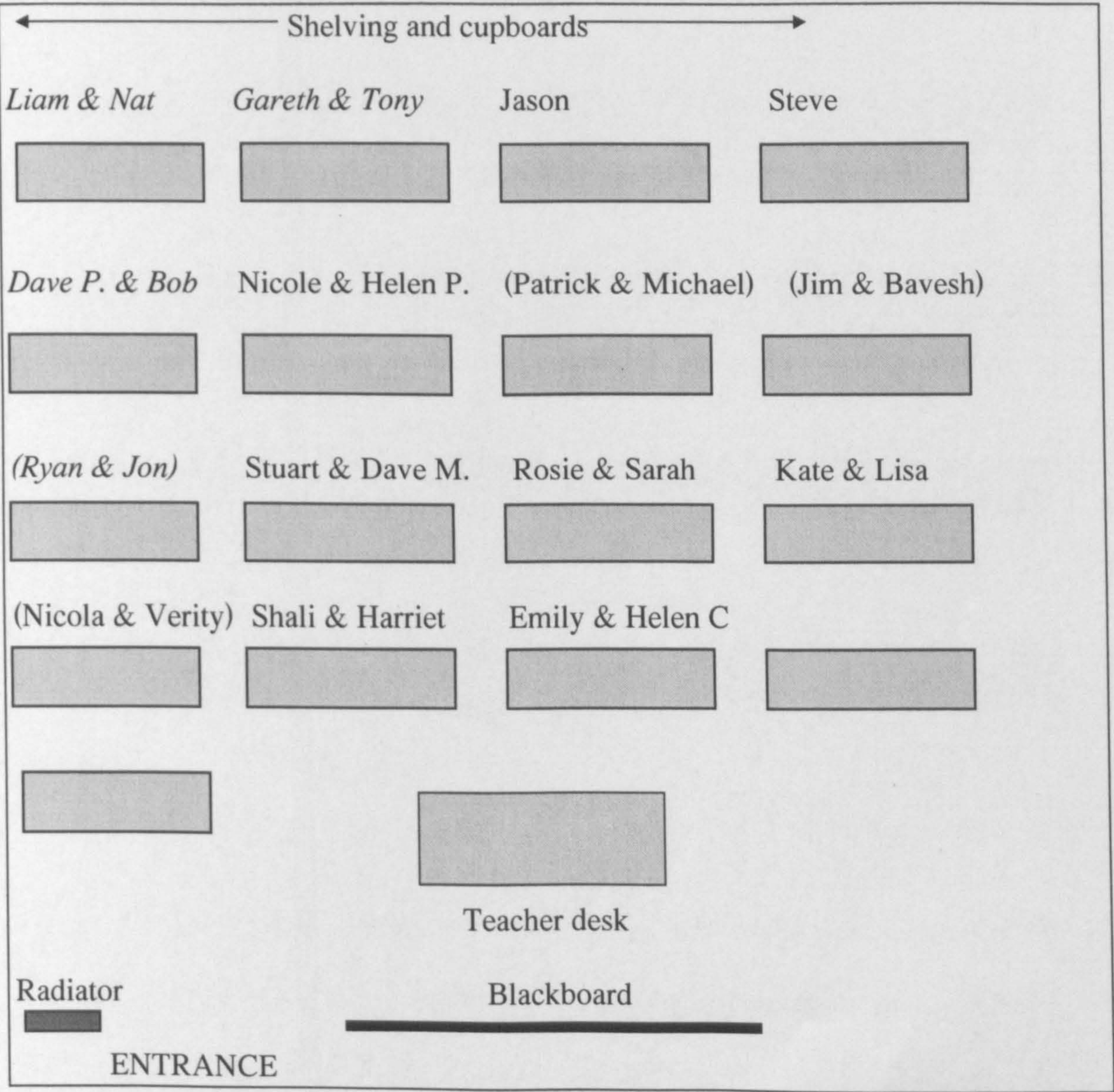
pairings carried from feeder schools. (Brackets) are

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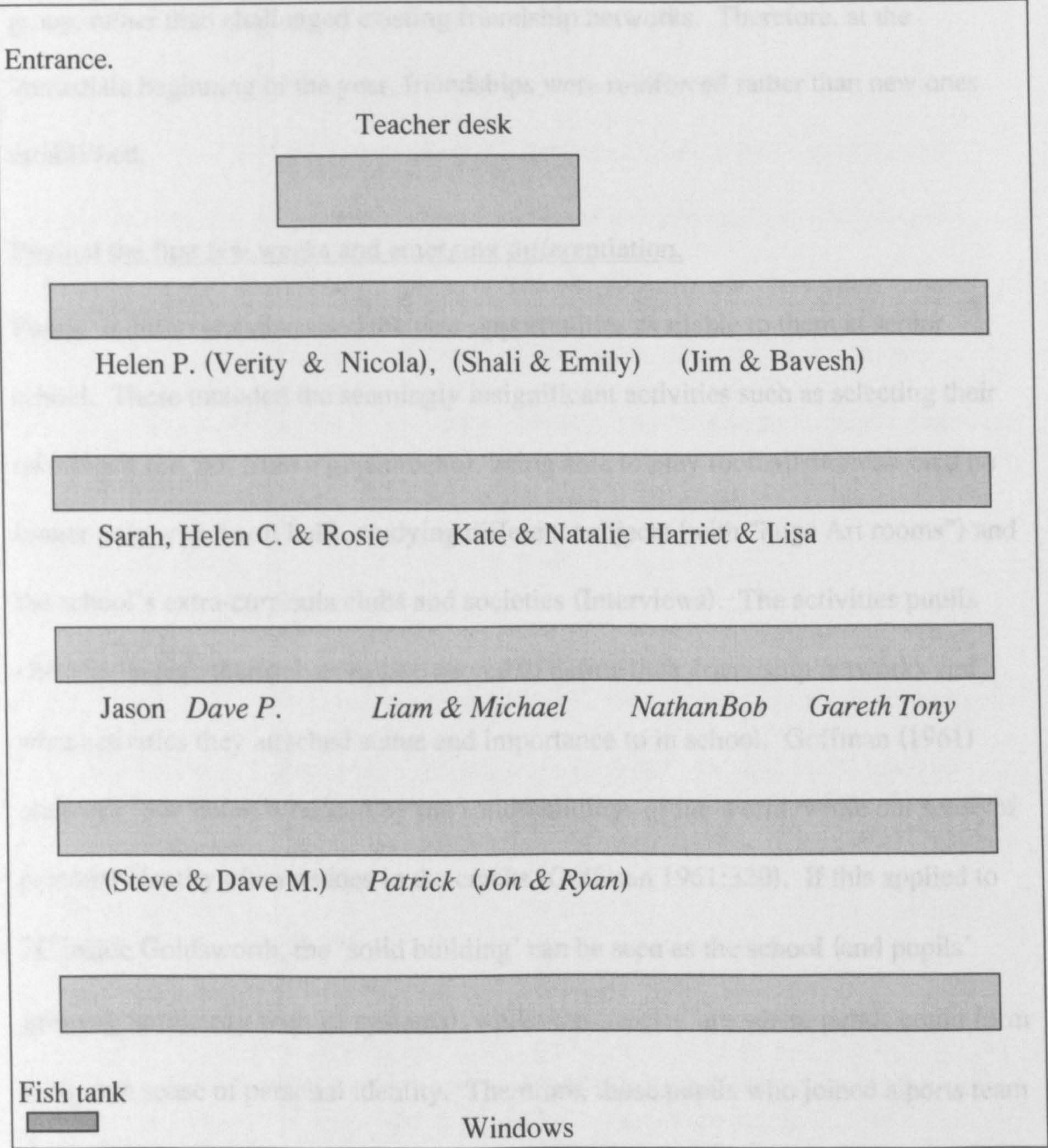
pairings carried from feeder schools.



The layouts of 7C's classrooms at Goldsworth varied, but without exception had tables for two pupils, such as displayed above in 7C's base form-group room.

Classroom designs varied but all joined two-seater tables together to form rows. The science lab shown in Figure 4 below is an example. The Pepsi-Max group is shown in italics, and pairs and self-selecting friendship partnerships and brackets represent friendships carried across from previous schools. Michael and Patrick, a friendship pair continued from feeder school, have both successfully joined the Pepsi-Max group.

Fig. 4 Layout of 7C's science laboratory classroom. January, 1998.



The implication of the physical layout of classrooms at Goldsworth, disposed more towards pairing than larger social groups. For example, in terms of permissible interaction during lessons (i.e. interaction and talking which would not draw punitive attention from staff) the pairings pupils worked in were more important than social networks within the form-group as a whole. At the beginning of the year, the

majority of pupils merely continued working with the people they already knew and lessons were organised so that pupils were not regularly forced to work with people they did not already know. 7C *collected* new people together in their new form-group, rather than challenged existing friendship networks. Therefore, at the immediate beginning of the year, friendships were reinforced rather than new ones established.

Beyond the first few weeks and emerging differentiation.

Pupils' in interview discussed the new opportunities available to them at senior school. These included the seemingly insignificant activities such as selecting their own lunch (i.e. not from a given menu), being able to play football at break (and no longer only with a soft ball), studying different subjects (with "huge Art rooms") and the school's extra-curricula clubs and societies (Interviews). The activities pupils chose to engage themselves in also served to define their friendship networks and what activities they attached status and importance to in school. Goffman (1961) observes "our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks (Goffman 1961:320). If this applied to 7C inside Goldsworth, the 'solid building' can be seen as the school (and pupils' growing familiarity with its systems), whilst the 'cracks' are where pupils could form their own sense of personal identity. Therefore, those pupils who joined a sports team inside or outside school came to attach more significance to their performance in Games and P.E. than, for example, Maths or Science. Similarly, the keen readers in 7C were more confident in their reading aloud in English lessons than in their performance at sports. As a result, the intra-form-group hierarchies changed with the timetable. One example is Jason.

Jason's strengths lay in history and English but he was weak in physical education and games, and in these latter subjects he was an extremely reluctant participant and threw several tantrums (Fieldnotes). One incident demonstrates how status levels varied within the form-group across the timetable.

Jason was playing in a game of basketball in which his team lost. Jason's team-players then blamed his poor performance (he had not attempted to take an active part in the game) for their defeat and were so critical that the teacher gave them a verbal warning about their behaviour at the end of the lesson. On this particular day, basketball was immediately followed by a history lesson. The same pupils who were highly critical of Jason, then deferred to him and sought his help during the history lesson (Fieldnotes).

The example of Jason was not unique within 7C. The internal hierarchies among the form changed with the timetable and pupils' own area of interest influenced the criterion on which they evaluated their peers. Academic performance was important, but it was not alone:

- Tony: Jason asks Michael 'have you got this?' [a level in a strategy computer game] and Michael always says 'yes,' because he's good at computer games and he goes, Jason goes, 'why do you always have to be the best at things and I have to be second?' But Michael's not the best at things – he's not the best at sport.
- Patrick: Yes he is, he's the best.
- Tony: I only got a few marks less than him on our tissue-paper thing.
- Patrick: But you still got less than him, didn't you?
- Tony: But he's not the best at sport. We are.
- Patrick: But then you and me are better.
- Tony: Yeah.

(Pupil interview)

Or, as one pupil succinctly put it:

And in football, he's got a strong shoulder barge.

(Pupil interview)

Pupil interviews revealed a clear awareness of their own individual placement within the form-group in comparison to their peers. Indeed, when I asked pupils who they considered to be the most popular member of the form-group, they universally listed pupils with high academic abilities (Pupil Interviews). In this sense, even *without* formal assessment and form-group rankings, pupils associated academic ability with status. However, at the same time, their mixed-ability group mediated abilities through the timetable. That is, 7C's expanded curriculum at Goldsworth permitted a greater diversity in which subject pupils identified most closely with, for example, the subjects that they enjoyed or in which they were talented.

The analysis of 7C to this point has concentrated on introductions. It has established the immediate series of friendship networks within 7C, clarified that the form-group contained a diversity of academic abilities and that pupils were aware of each other's abilities and that these changed across the timetable. For example, individual pupils such as Tony and Patrick identified themselves most closely with activities in which they performed well (in their case sport). Phase 2 of the research moved beyond defining the school and its internal organisation and the opening characteristics of 7C to view the implications cooperation groups held in the long-term. For instance, where Lambart (1982) found instances of "crypto-streaming" among the girls in her grammar school study (from setting in certain subjects), would sources of differentiation emerge among 7C, perhaps as a result of school *and* friendship networks (Lambart 1982:192)? Changes occurring over the year and inclusion or

exclusion pressures within 7C groups and their orientations towards school are now defined.

PHASE 2: Inclusion, exclusion and intra-set differentiation.

The friendship networks between the girls in 7C shifted across the year. Whereas a large group of boys had transferred together from their previous school, only smaller groups of girls had moved together. The largest two groups, from St. Patrick's Combined and Onneley Middle Schools, contained only three girls with one strong, established friendship pairing between Nicola and Verity. The co-operation groups between the girls in 7C at the beginning of the year were open across the form-group. A pair of girls from Murray Combined School joined the six girls from St. Patrick's and Onneley Schools to form a loose association who varied their partnerships and group work amongst themselves.

The friendship networks among the girls solidified following the Christmas vacation. The friendship between Nicola and Verity emerged at the core of the largest friendship group among the girls. Verity was the most popularly perceived girl in 7C and her friendship network was also the largest among 7C's girls. However, a new, strong friendship had developed between two girls from separate feeder schools, Harriet and Lisa. These two had become a strong pairing to the extent they no longer circulated among the larger group of girls but always chose to work together. Their close friendship therefore served to detach them from the larger friendship group of girls. Membership of the core group of girls was defined in activities where pupils selected their own teams in which to work. The core group was defined by girls often

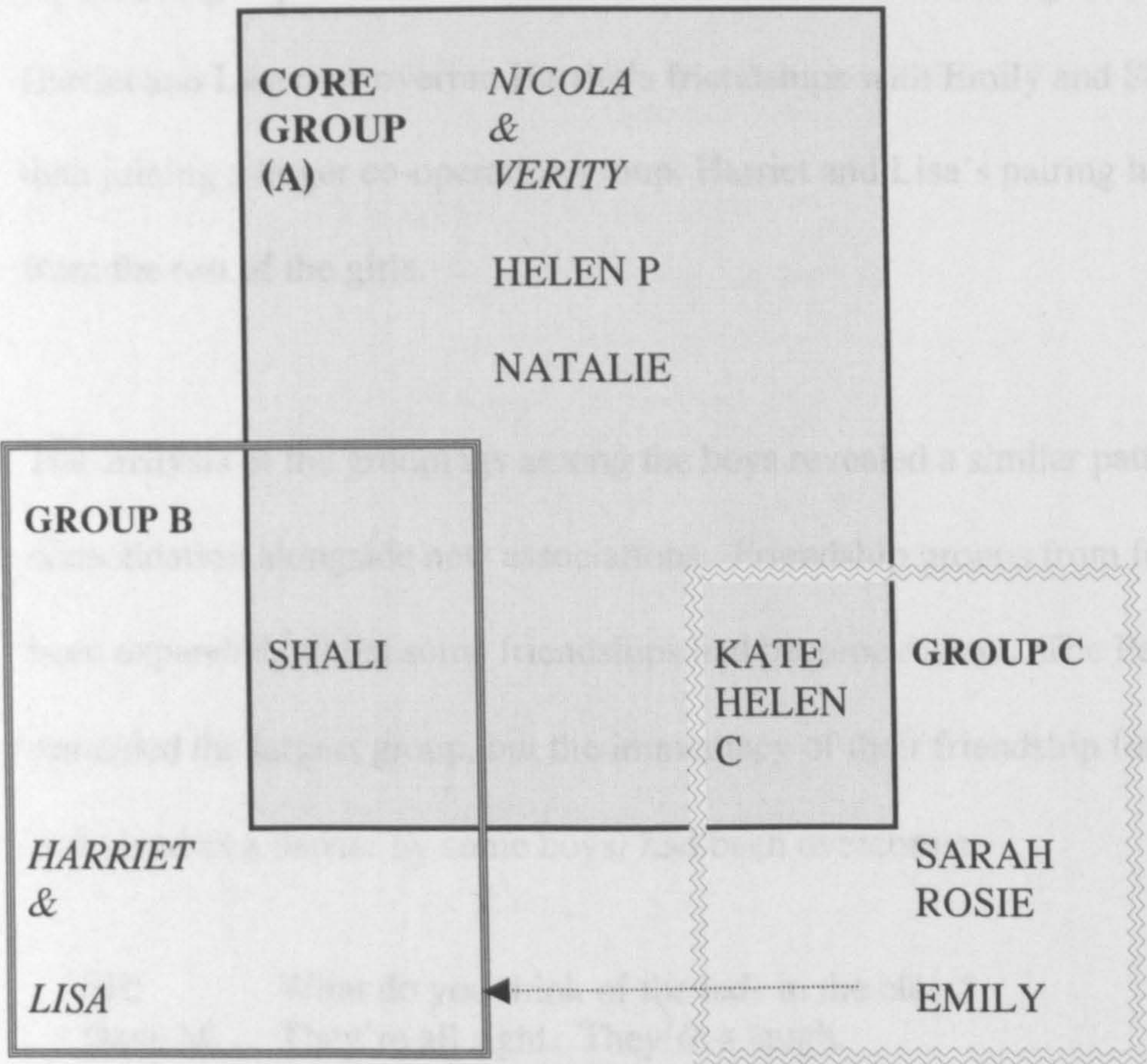
working with Nicola and Verity, by sitting next to one of the other members of the group in lessons and spending break and lunchtimes together.

The remaining girls in 7C, namely those outside the core group of girls, were the girls who had transferred alone into 7C from their feeder schools. These ‘isolates,’ in the sense of their not knowing any other girl in 7C, paired together during lessons, but were less likely to join the core group of girls for group activities and tasks in lessons.

The friendship networks between 7C’s girls, as they had emerged by Phase 2, can be represented as follows:

Fig.5. Phase 2 7C girls' friendship patterns (based on seating plans and self-selecting team groups).

There were two girls with the same first name in 7C. The form-group used their first name plus the first letter of their surname, for example Helen P. Whilst I have changed the two girls first names, I have retained the method 7C and their teachers used to distinguish between them.



- Key:
- Italic pairing - core partnerships.
 - Boxes - group associations.
 - Dotted lines - individual associations.

The shaded box (group A) is the largest group and included the most popular girls in 7C (Pupil Interviews). The diagram patterns Harriet and Lisa's distance from group A, along with the three girls in group C. Rosie and Sarah had transferred alone from their feeder schools into 7C. Group C girls (Sarah, Rosie and Emily) were the emerging isolated girls, for example they were the girls most likely to be left without

a partner in Games and P.E. lessons. Group C shared co-operation groups with some of group A members (Kate and Helen C.). This association indicates Kate and Helen C. were towards the periphery of group A as, unlike Shali, they rarely joined Nicola and Verity's team (the core members of group A). The connection between group B members is Emily, Harriet and Shali's common feeder school St. Patrick's. However, the core of group B was Harriet and Lisa's new friendship, forged at Goldsworth. Harriet and Lisa now overran Harriet's friendships with Emily and Shali and, rather than joining a larger co-operation group, Harriet and Lisa's pairing had removed them from the rest of the girls.

The analysis of the groupings among the boys revealed a similar pattern of consolidation alongside new associations. Friendship groups from feeder schools had been expanded, whilst some friendships had become distant. The Pepsi Max group remained the largest group, but the immediacy of their friendship (originally perceived as a barrier by some boys) had been overcome:

SH: What do you think of the lads in the class?

Dave M: They're all right. They're a laugh.

Stuart: Now they are.

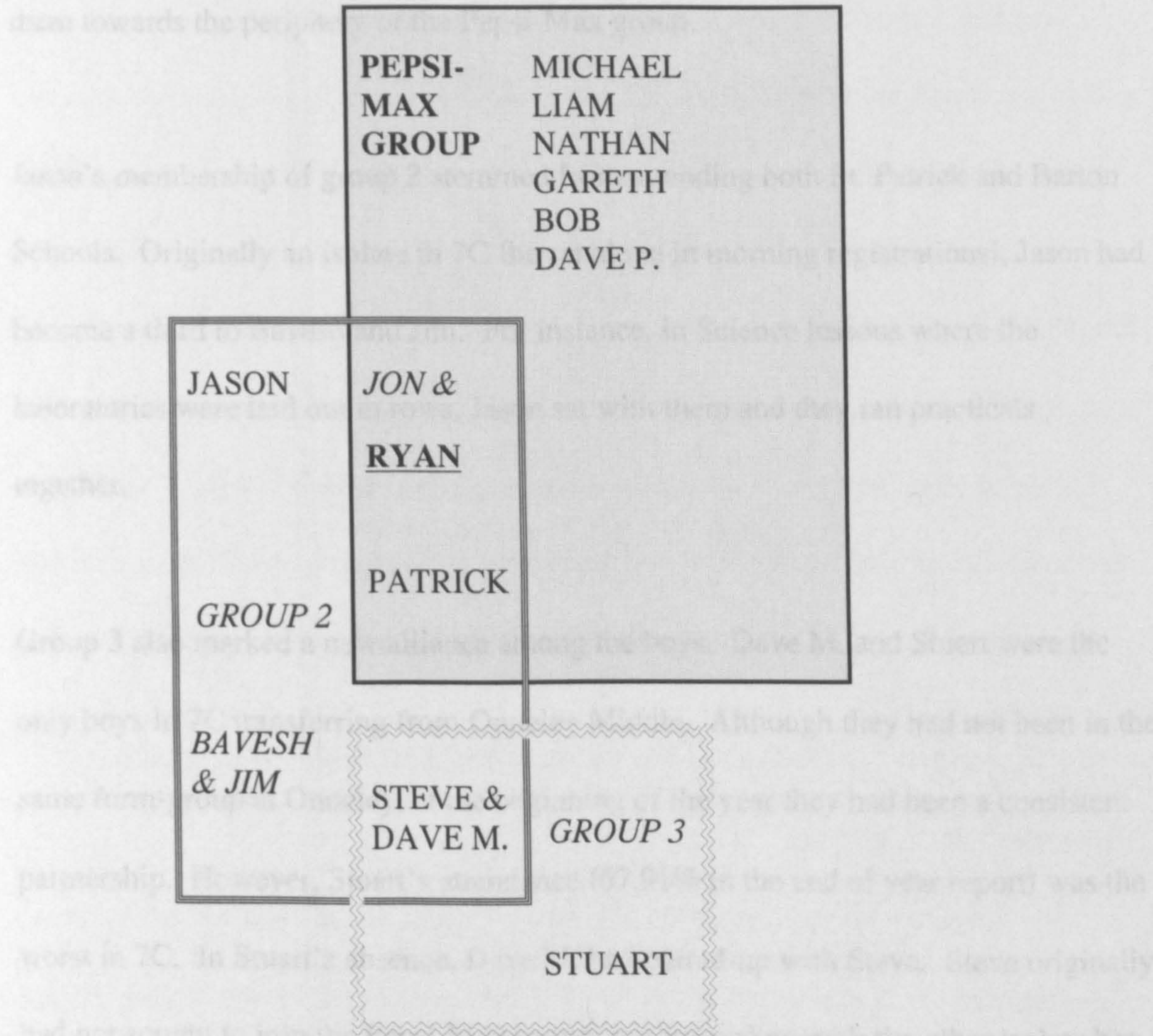
Dave M: Yeah, at first I didn't think I'd mix with them but I did and we've become friends.

(Pupil interview)

The interaction among 7C's boys outside lessons had extended. The Pepsi-Max boys joined with 7C boys other than those from Lindsay Junior, such as Steve and Dave M, to play football together at break and lunchtimes. However, inside the classroom, the association (with whom the boys sat) remained inside the core Pepsi-Max group. Pepsi-Max group boys did not sit next to the *same* boy within the Pepsi-Max group across the timetable, but changed partners in different lessons. For instance, Gareth

sat next to Bob for French and Nathan for English and the group remained positioned in the classroom together. This was in contrast to the rest of the boys, who tended to sit next to the same boy across the timetable. For instance, Ryan and Jon always sat next to each other, as did Baves and Jim. However, unlike the core pairing of Harriet and Lisa among the girls, these strong pairings among the boys did not distance them from the rest of the boys and they were part of a wider circle of friends. The friendship patterns among the boys in Phase 2 can be represented as follows:

Fig.6. Phase 2 7C boys' friendship patterns.



Key:
Italic pairing - constant partnerships.
Boxes - group associations.

The Pepsi-Max group remained the largest group among the boys, but membership inside the group had changed. Michael and Patrick (both from Barton County School) had joined the group, whilst Jon and Ryan (from Lindsay Junior) had begun to spend time with boys outside the Pepsi-Max group. Jon and Ryan along with the other long-standing friendship pairing, Bavesh and Jim, and Jason, made a second group who worked together for group activities. Group 2's friendship reached outside the classroom, in activities such as playing football at lunchtimes (in a separate group from the Pepsi-Max boys) or visiting the library together. Jon and Ryan's association with group 2 boys and that they sat next to one another across the timetable positioned them towards the periphery of the Pepsi-Max group.

Jason's membership of group 2 stemmed from attending both St. Patrick and Barton Schools. Originally an isolate in 7C (he sat alone in morning registrations), Jason had become a third to Bavesh and Jim. For instance, in Science lessons where the laboratories were laid out in rows, Jason sat with them and they ran practicals together.

Group 3 also marked a new alliance among the boys. Dave M. and Stuart were the only boys in 7C transferring from Onneley Middle. Although they had not been in the same form-group at Onneley, at the beginning of the year they had been a consistent partnership. However, Stuart's attendance (67.91% in the end of year report) was the worst in 7C. In Stuart's absence, Dave M. had paired-up with Steve. Steve originally had not sought to join the Pepsi-Max group, nor teamed up with the other isolate boy (Jason) like the two isolate girls, Rosie and Sarah, had done. I observed, and met, the friend from feeder school Steve spent time with who was now in another Year 7 form-

group. Dave M. And Steve shared more association with group 2 *in the classroom*, but *outside* they played in the Pepsi Max boys' football team and not group 2's. Steve and Dave M. sat towards the back of the classroom in lessons, as did the Pepsi-Max group, whereas group 2 sat near the front.

The key shifts among the boys' friendships in the months following Christmas were Michael's firm establishment within the Pepsi-Max group and Patrick's mobility between several groups. Michael and Patrick entered 7C as a friendship pair from their previous school, St. Patrick's. Both boys successfully joined the Pepsi-Max friendship group at the beginning of the year. Patrick, however, had maintained working co-operation groups in lessons with other boys from St. Patrick (such as Jim and Bavesh). Indeed, Patrick regularly worked (albeit in groups) with almost every boy in 7C and he was the only boy able, or predisposed, to do this. For example, in interview, Bob said he did not get on with Jason and did everything possible to avoid him, and indeed pupils were able to have very little interaction with some 7C pupils if they chose to do so. Patrick's ready interaction with boys from all three groups of boys within the form-group seems to indicate he was a popular boy in 7C. However, in interview, 7C's boys described Michael as the most popular boy in the form-group:

Of the boys in our class, Michael's popular and he's a boffin, I suppose, he's so clever, in academic brilliance, whatever.

(Patrick, Pupil Interview)

In interview, the boys associated academic ability with status and Michael consistently achieved the highest marks in form-group tests across the curriculum.²⁹

²⁹ Not all subjects were regularly assessed or the results made equally visible. For example, the Maths department at Goldsworth had designed a series of regular internal tests and the results were read out in

Patrick, unlike Michael, belonged to several of the school's sports teams, including cricket and basketball, as was Tony from the Pepsi-Max group. Patrick's (and Tony's) sporting abilities made them both popular choices in Games and P.E. lessons.

Before the pro and anti- school attitudes of each group are identified, the social class characteristics of each friendship within 7C are defined as follows.

lessons. French lessons, in contrast, used National Key Stage Level Levels 1-4 in its internal assessments, which were more generic.

Table 7. Social class background by friendship group, 7C.

		Group					
		Girls A	Girls B	Girls C	Boys Pepsi-Max	Boys 2	Boys 3
Social class	I		1		1		
	II				2	3	
	III NM	3	1		3	1	
	IIIM		1	1	3	2	1
	IV	3		4			1
	V						
	Unclassified	1					1

Table 8. Social class background (non-manual and manual) by friendship group, 7C.

		<u>Group</u>					
		Girls A	Girls B	Girls C	Boys Pepsi-Max	Boys 2	Boys 3
<i>Social</i>	Non-manual	3	2		6	4	
<i>class</i>	Manual	3	1	5	3	2	2
	Unclassified	1					1

The pattern, even inside such a small group, is that the most popular groups, which also contained the most academically able pupils, correspond with pupils for a comparatively high social class.

Pro- and anti-school attitudes among the friendship networks.

Goldsworth had not formally differentiated its Year 7 (by streaming, setting or banding), yet 7C had created informal divisions in their friendship groups. In relation to differentiation-polarisation theory, the question became to consider the *impact* of

these groups within the form-group. For instance, were the groups sufficiently distinctive to affect a polarising process within 7C? The evidence to suggest that some form of ostracism took place is compelling. Over the year, one girl left for another school, another girl moved to another Year 7 form-group and a third girl and one boys' absenteeism was reported in the local press as evidence of bullying inside the school. The processes underpinning these events are now described, although I would suggest the 'bullying' term used by the local press was sensationalist. The different behavioural patterns and attitudes towards schooling among the six friendship groupings inside 7C are considered first.

7C did not exhibit the *extreme* forms of anti-school behaviour Hargreaves, Lacey or Ball describe. No members of 7C were expelled, such as Lambart (1982) described. I did not witness, nor later hear, any complete classroom disruption, such as Burgess (1984) describes when he lost control of his teaching group. For example, during one history lesson when the teacher left the room for a few minutes, 7C ignored the set task and indulged in alternative activities, from playing with the light switches and leaning out of the open windows to light social gossip. However, the moment the teacher re-entered the room, all was as it had been. Pupils suspended the lesson only for as long as the teacher was absent (Fieldnotes). There are forms of misbehaviour that attract the punitive attention of the school and some that are less visible. For example, Lambart (1976) described 'the Sisterhood's' behaviour, dress style and language. These characteristics of a group can be more, or less, school orientated and several indicators will now be discussed.

In the late nineteen nineties, all schools in England and Wales were obliged to make public their attendance records and attendance was an indicator used by Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball. 7C's attendance was summarised in the end of year reports to parents. In comparison with the previous Year 7, 7C's attendance was favourable (although there was only one year available for comparison with the lower age of transition). A number of 7C pupils had been on authorised holidays during term time, which make statistical comparisons problematic. Setting these aside, Sarah, Rosie, Kate and Jon emerged with a number of occasional absences during the first half of the year and Stuart, by far, had the most. Rosie, Sarah and Stuart also received the highest number of late marks in 7C. With the exception of Jon (whose records revealed a history of anxiety attacks that continued only during the beginning of the year), 7C's absentees were those towards the periphery of friendship groups or the isolates within the form-group (Pupil Records).

Behaviour can be used to indicate pro and anti-school attitudes. Clear instances of misbehaviour are those attracting the punitive attention of teaching staff. In the opening phases of fieldwork, the Pepsi-Max group of boys received the largest number of teacher reprimands for misbehaviour in 7C during lessons. For example, talking loudly, being out of their seats or turning round to talk to friends (Fieldnotes). Beeping electronic pet key-rings were also a cause for teacher complaint at the time of the research (Fieldnotes). One technique several teachers used to stop repeated forms of misbehaviours was to move pupils to sit nearer to the front or away from their friendship group. In Phase 2, in the lessons I observed, Gareth, Jason, Liam, Dave P., Rosie, Harriet and Lisa, were moved during lessons. These pupils were part of a larger friendship group and it was interaction with their group, or their friendship pair,

which led to their being moved (Fieldnotes). In this sense, it was group interaction that distracted pupils from attending to their schoolwork and attracted teacher sanctions.

Uniform is also an understated indicator of pro or anti school behaviour. Delamont (1984), for instance, describes how the fashion-conscious girls in her study adapted their uniforms by raising the hem of their skirts. The uniform at Goldsworth required all pupils to wear the school tie and the girls could wear either trousers or a skirt. However, subtle adaptations were apparent within 7C. Several of the boys who changed into their trainers to play football at lunchtime did not always change back, including Steve, Liam and Dan P. This behaviour occasionally caught staff's attention:

It's a good school, but the uniform's a bunch of shit. I want to wear trainers, and sir [7C's form tutor] says why don't you just go to X [a non-uniformed local comprehensive]?

(Steve, Pupil Interview)

The differences between staff were also noticeable. 7C's history and Music teachers, for instance, conducted uniform checks, whereas other staff did not challenge minor breaches of uniform, such as trainers. The different ways pupils presented themselves in lessons were also distinguishable. The Pepsi-Max group of boys were 'smarter' in comparison to Dave M. and Stuart, who worked together, for instance, in terms of following the fashion for short haircuts. The form-group also all wore the school's crested jumper, with the exceptions of Shali, Hannah and Steve, who also wore dark coloured sports sweatshirts. The differences between some pupils inside 7C emerge in their conduct in and outside lessons:

At lunchtime we all have a game, the whole entire class of boys, except for Jim and Jason, because Jason's a bit of a hmmm. I better not say anything because he'll beat me up. [laughs] [...] We play football at lunch with this other class but when foul us, they have a go and we all like start on them and have fights.
(Steve, Pupil Interview)

The characteristics of group 3 boys (Steve, Stuart and Dave M.), in the games of football I observed, were far more confrontational in their matches with another Year 7 form-group than the rest of their team (the Pepsi-Max group). Dave M. and Stuart were both involved in scuffles on (and off) the pitch with other players (although this did not come to the attention of the staff). The behaviour of these group 3 boys begins to distinguish them from group 2. Pupils who received detentions for failure to complete homework included Stuart, Dave M. and Steve (End-of-year reports, Fieldnotes). Dave M. had received four detentions by early July. The group three boys were the least academically able, as this was a concern for some members of staff. Indeed, Stuart was in the process of being statemented, that is requiring additional teaching support in the classroom, by December and 7C's English teacher described, "Stuart needs one-to-one help, I just can't physically do that" (English teacher Interview). Dave M. and Stuart were quiet inside the classroom, whereas Steve took a more active role:

Steve: She's [the Maths' teacher] not strict enough with me. I lob rubbers at everyone, especially at Ryan and Jon, and Patrick and Michael.
SH: And you don't get done for it?
Steve: She only says 'stop it Steve,' and that. Yeah, whatever! And she goes, say like, 'get your maths homework out' and I go 'yeah, yeah, get on with it, this is so boring, maths is crap' and she doesn't even say anything to me.

(Pupil Interview)

Steve's behaviour and outlook on Goldsworth school life was notably anti-school and he described his enjoyment of school far lower than the rest of 7C (Pupil Interviews). Steve was far more extreme and vocal in his behaviour in the classroom than the other boys in group 3. In one lesson I observed, Steve lost his temper during a Games

lesson after an umpire's (teacher's) decision in the game and threw the ball away in disgust (Fieldnotes). This strikes a contrast to the types of behaviour and outlook among the group 2 boys. Ryan, unlike Steve, refused to use the swearword 'crap.' Group 2 boys Jim and Bavesh described pupils smoking in the toilets and chewing gum in lessons as forms of bad behaviour. Ryan had found a needle in school and immediately reported it to the headteacher. The group 2 boys were pro-school in orientation, in their academic work, their behaviour and their attitude towards their teachers:

Patrick: She's [7C's Maths teacher] really clever at maths, but she's not really a very good teacher because everyone can just mess around and stuff. She's really clever and knows a lot about Maths, she's not actually a good teacher.

Steve: She can't shout.

(Pupil Interview)

Patrick, in both the Pepsi-Max group and group 2 boys, was pro-school in outlook.

Bavesh, like Patrick, was also more interested in the teachers who helped him to learn. He provided a few examples, such as Music lessons when they copied material from a textbook, saying that he knew the information was "not really going in" and he contrasted this with 7C's English teacher, arguing that whilst some of their teachers concentrated on the basics, she aimed higher with their group (Pupil Interview). Jim and Bavesh both described one of the big changes they had found in life at Goldsworth was the time they now spent completing homework (Pupil Interview).

Dave M., in contrast, said of his homework, "I think, I better do this, and I don't get round to doing it" (Pupil Interview).

The examples reveal different attitudes towards the school and schoolwork among the boys. The distinction between them can be made using the school's ethos that all pupils strive towards their own potential (School Prospectus). Group 3 boys were not

orientated towards academic activities, but disrupted lessons and engaged in passive resistance such as failing to do homework. The group 2's core boys were quiet in lessons, sat at the front of the classroom, were orientated towards their academic work (both in and out of school) and rarely attracted the punitive attention of staff (Fieldnotes). In the terminology of differentiation-polarisation theory, group 3 was anti school and group 2 pro-school.

The behavioural form of the Pepsi-Max group synthesised elements of both group 2 and 3's behaviour. They received the most punitive or corrective teacher attention in class, yet at the same time, they were work-orientated and mixed both non-task orientated behaviour (for instance, gossiping and pushing each other off their chairs) with work in lessons (Fieldnotes). The Pepsi-Max group also volunteered the most verbal answers in class without prompting (Fieldnotes). Inside the group was the kind of cooperative behaviour Abraham (1989) described in his study. The group shared their answers, clarified the task for those who were unsure and lent their possessions among their friends (Fieldnotes). The values inside this friendship group were *interactive*; participative in school-based activities, but alongside 'having a laugh.'

The way they characterised the group revealed their values:

Patrick: Nathan is funny. He always laughs, he gets on with everyone.
Ryan: Yeah, he's cool.
Patrick: He's loyal, a good best friend.

(Pupil Interview)

The general orientation inside the Pepsi-Max group was pro-school. The Pepsi-Max group described the detentions they had received were for misbehaviour in class, whereas group 3 boys' accounted they received detentions for failure to complete homework (Pupil Interviews). In terms of academic ability, the Pepsi-Max group was in the top half of their form-group (End-of-year reports) and several of the group

represented the school at sport, including the football, cricket and basketball teams.

However, *inside* the group, their values were not purely towards academic or sporting attainment. They described one member of the group, Gareth:

Tony: He doesn't try at all. Well, when it's Wembley doubles [a football game], when he doesn't get a partner he moans that he has to go by himself. Nathan doesn't moan, he sometimes doesn't get a partner and, but Nathan tries...

Patrick: Yeah, Nathan tries. The thing is everyone knows that Nathan is... not brilliant at football but they always let him off when he fouls, they just let him off...

Tony: Yeah. He goal-hangs and people let the...

Patrick: Yeah, let the goal in, to make Gareth jealous.

(Pupil Interview)

The boys revealed they valued more than ability or achievement, but also that there were tensions within the group. My interviews showed the opinion of the rest of 7C about the Pepsi-Max group boys. I had asked why the girls did not answer many questions in class and Verity and Nicola, the core friendship pair of group A girls, provided a typical response. They complained that the Pepsi-Max boys laughed if anyone gave the wrong answer and, as a result, the girls did not volunteer many answers in class. Jon, a periphery member of the Pepsi-Max group, showed the boys' experiences were not so different. "I don't mind being wrong [answering a question in class], as long as I'm usually right" (Pupil Interview). The laughter, interaction and boisterous character of the Pepsi-Max group was a source of intimidation for the rest of 7C, but the tension was also felt inside the group:

Patrick: If Gareth does anything wrong he gets very moody about it, because Gareth got sent off at the Fiesta [the school's summer festival].

SH: He got what?

Patrick: At the football tournament and he got sent off for punching the ball.

SH: For punching it, he wasn't in goal?

Patrick: No. So that's Gareth for you, he's a little bit funny. He gets sent off.

(Pupil Interview)

My classroom observation showed even the popular and garrulous members of the Pepsi-Max group, such as Liam, who owned the football they played with at lunchtime and therefore organised the game, were laughed at as much as other pupils in giving a wrong answer (Fieldnotes). The very character of the Pepsi-Max group offered both status and humiliation in the eyes of the group; status if they made their friends laugh, but ridicule if they missed the mark completely.

The genders remained segregated in lessons, as no 7C pupil voluntarily sat next to a member of the opposite sex, as Jason summarised (Fieldnotes):

SH: Tell me about the girls.

Jason: That's not really our [the boys'] territory.

(Pupil Interview)

The profile of the girls within 7C, when compared to the boys', was lower in terms of teacher reprimands, detentions and none of the girls represented the school at sport (Fieldnotes, Pupil Interviews). The girls were smaller in number than the boys (sixteen to twelve at the beginning of the year) and the friendship groups less distinct. The main conflict between the girls involved access to and participation in the most popular group. A clash arose between the girls who unsuccessfully sought access to this group and, most notably, the perceived attempt by one girl to break up the core group A friendship between Verity and Nicola. The self-selecting team group activities following Christmas revealed that the three girls' friendship groups often mixed and combined with one another. For example, whereas some boys never worked together, most of the girls chose to do so. The diversity of the team sharing activities among the girls is demonstrated in the following diagram:

Fig.9. Phase 2 7C girls’ team activity groups.

Key: X indicates regular shared cooperation groups during lessons, for example, at least once a week.

	VERITY	NICOLA	SHALI	HELEN P.	NATALIE	ROSIE	SARAH	LISA	HARRIET	HELEN C.	EMILY	KATE
VERITY		X	X	X	X			X		X	X	
NICOLA	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	
SHALI	X	X			X		X	X	X			
HELEN P	X	X			X	X	X					X
NATALIE	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X
ROSIE				X	X		X	X		X		X
SARAH			X	X	X	X		X				X
LISA	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
HARRIET			X					X		X		
HELEN C	X	X				X		X	X		X	
EMILY	X	X			X			X		X		X
KATE				X	X	X	X	X			X	

The analysis of *pairings* in lessons, however, revealed greater regularity (Fieldnotes). The core friendship pairings remained in place between Verity and Nicola, and Lisa and Harriet, as Harriet commented, “Nicola and Verity can’t be away from each other” (Pupil Interview). Helen P. and Natalie, and Rosie and Sarah, joined them as regular pairings across the different lessons across the timetable.

The behaviour among the girls indicates some different orientations towards school among the girls. The group A girls remained the largest network among the girls. If Verity and Nicola are taken as the core group members, as they were universally described as the most popular girls in 7C, Shali, Helen P., Natalie and Helen C. regularly worked or sat with them. These girls shared their time together at break and lunchtimes and displayed the cooperative behaviour found among the Pepsi-Max group boys, for instance lending one another equipment and reading each other magazines.

The characteristics of the group A girls were pro-school. For instance, Nicola criticised Harriet and Lisa for “mucking about” and giggling in lessons (Pupil Interview). Verity and Nicola defined the kind of teachers they liked and respected in the school, for instance, they needed to be strict, but still make a few jokes in lessons. They provided 7C’s English teacher as an example, arguing she joked with the form-group but kept the boys under control (Pupil Interview). The group A girls reported a high level of enjoyment for school life and attended several after-school activities, such as computer club and dancing club (Pupil Interviews).

Harriet and Laura, the core friendship pairing in group B girls, strike a contrast. Harriet and Lisa attracted the most complaints from teaching staff for not concentrating on their work, distracting other pupils or talking loudly (Fieldnotes). Comments such as, “Right, Lisa and Harriet, can you stop being juvenile?” were not unusual (7C’s English teacher, Fieldnotes). Laura’s teachers described, “Laura can allow her concentration to lapse in class,” “she still misses homework on the odd

occasion” and “is often poorly motivated” (Geography, Maths and History, End-of-year report).

Harriet and Lisa came to Goldsworth from two of the school’s popular feeder schools and therefore, between them, they already knew most of the girls in 7C. This made their access into groups easier than for girls who had transferred alone. Inside the classroom, they enjoyed interactive subjects, such as Art, Games, P.E. and Drama and Science practicals (Pupil Interview). Harriet and Lisa’s misbehaviour in lessons often drew the teacher’s attention, yet at the same time they felt embarrassed and hated “being picked on” to answer a question in class, complaining the boys laughed if they got the answer wrong (Pupil Interview). Harriet was keen on sport and her passion for football (she followed Manchester United and visited the ground that year) attracted derogatory comments from the group A girls when she played football with the boys (Pupil Interviews). However, neither of the girls was motivated to join school clubs, but chose to attend their local youth club together twice a week and had part-time jobs.

Harriet and Lisa’s descriptions of their teachers are interesting when compared to Paul’s pro-school and Steve’s anti-school attitudes. Steve disliked 7C’s strict teachers and Paul criticised lax teachers. Harriet and Laura highly rated several strict teachers’ lessons because they made their subject interesting. Harriet and Laura further admitted their behaviour at times deserved staff’s attention (Pupil Interview). This seems contradictory, that whilst their *behaviour* can be portrayed as anti-school, their general attitude was not. Their distinction from the largest, group A girls is their

comparatively lower enjoyment of school and that, like the anti-school group 3 boys, they were not motivated to achieve at Goldsworth.

The profile of group C girls is more difficult to define. Figure 9 illustrates that the girls varied the people they worked with for group activities, far more than the boys. However, using the core friendship in the group A girls between Verity and Nicola again, several girls are towards the periphery of this interaction. Rosie, Kate and Sarah did not share groups with Verity or Nicola, rather working with the other group A girls, Shali, Natalie and Helen P. Classroom observation further showed that Rosie and Sarah were not *immediate* choices (Fieldnotes). For instance, in P.E. and Games lessons when two ‘captains’ selected teams one-by-one, Rosie and Sarah were often the last girls to be selected (Fieldnotes). This was less their ability at sport, Helen C. was noticeably weaker, than their friendship networks inside 7C. Helen C.’s friendship with the group A girls made her a more popular choice (Fieldnotes).

The behaviour of Sarah and Ruth also differed from the largest friendship group among the girls. Sarah and Rosie had the highest number of late marks among the girls, for instance, more than Harriet and Lisa’s combined (School records and End-of-year report). I later discovered Sarah’s parents were divorcing and in the weeks before Christmas, Sarah missed school for several days and where she received a high number of late marks. Ruth also had a number of late marks, but whilst Sarah was a reticent pupil in class, Rosie was a “chatty” and flamboyant character who was always “trying to be the centre of attention” (Fieldnotes, End-of-year report). I discussed Sarah’s situation with 7C’s English teacher, Miss Gibson. Miss Gibson was one of

Goldsworth's many NQT staff³⁰ and she taught several Year 7 form-groups. She described that Sarah and Steve both had severe reading difficulties and, whilst 7C was not unique in this respect, the support they needed to catch up was not available. Neither had Sarah found with Rosie or Emily the interactive and academic cooperation I witnessed, for example, between Bavesh and Jon and anti-school boys Dave M. and Stuart (Fieldnotes).

The circumstances surrounding Sarah's background make characterising her attitude towards schooling problematic. That she had not settled into the form-group well could be due to Sarah's quiet personality, the impact of her parents' divorce or being academically behind her peers. Sarah and Rosie had quite different personalities but both had failed to join the core 7C girls' friendship group and neither were popular girls, as Ruth revealed, "I also did Viva [dance class] but I didn't go because there was no one to work with" (Pupil Interview).

In summary, the group C girls' anti-school behaviour involved absence, lateness or forgetfulness in terms of bringing equipment to lessons rather than active misbehaviour, such as Harriet and Laura's. However, the group C girls lacked the motivation of the Pepsi-Max and group 2 boys, as Miss Gibson summarised, "Ruth has a tendency to say she can't do something the moment it becomes challenging" (Interview). These girls were less academically able than their peers but a subtle combination of the school's support system, the friendships already inside 7C and

30 Goldsworth's new headteacher had changed the profile of Goldsworth's staff by appointing a high proportion of NQT and young staff. 7C's teachers demonstrate the point. Twelve lessons per week were taught by NQT staff or staff in their second year of full-time teaching, including core curriculum subjects such as Maths, English and History.

their characteristics prevented them being seen by their teachers or fellow pupils as pro-school pupils.

PHASE 3: Differentiation and polarisation within 7C.

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball conceptualise the school as a social system that operates on a number of levels. Several of those levels inside Goldsworth School have been defined, including the headteacher's vision of the school, the organisation of the intake year and the characteristics of one form-group. The specific focus of the research was on the potentially differentiating effect of Goldsworth's social system upon its pupils. The friendship networks emerging within 7C proved to be the most distinctive source of intra-form-group differentiation. The orientations towards school inside each group have been defined. The concern now moves to examine the impact of these groups and the wider systems of the school in terms of a *polarising* effect.

In the final months of the year, several conflicts occurred inside 7C. The long-term consequences of these conflicts support the polarisation thesis. However, the processes leading to the divisions within 7C varied. The polarisation among the boys, girls and then the whole form-group are now discussed, and the different forms of intervention taken by the school.

The impact of Jason's autism on the social relations inside 7C.

Jason had been diagnosed with a mild form of autism shortly before he arrived at Goldsworth School. The school and Jason's parents had taken the decision at the beginning of the year not to inform the rest of the form-group (indeed, Jason did not

know), as the immediate period of transition was to be the most difficult stage. A teaching assistant was assigned to 7C for Jason's first month at the school.

It soon became clear Jason had not settled as originally anticipated. The teaching assistant's first report to the school, to which I was made privy, noted Jason's behaviour had begun to "mark him off as 'different' within the class" (Teaching assistant's report on Jason, Fieldnotes). The teaching assistant's report described, "Jason tends to sing along and chatter to himself," yet my own observations revealed more problematic behaviour. Jason was impatient for teacher attention in lessons and called out in lessons, when pupils were expected to raise their hands and wait silently (Fieldnotes). He was more dramatic than his peers in participation in lessons, for instance, adopting a high-pitched voice when speaking in a French oral lesson and imitating hitting a gong round Patrick's head when Patrick answered a question in an English lesson (Fieldnotes). Jason took longer than his peers to settle in lessons, required more explanations about tasks from both his peers and staff and was often told to stop reading his novel in lessons (Fieldnotes).

That group, as far as I understand it, has been engineered somewhat, or that was the idea, because one individual has got severe learning difficulties and I think the idea was, or was intimated towards in staff meetings last year, that the group would be engineered in such a way so that there would be no other pupils with particular learning difficulties in there.

(Male French teacher Interview)

Jason's teaching staff granted him more levity in his behaviour due to his condition and this was not unnoticed by his peers:

- Patrick: [In] history ages ago, he [Jason] was messing about and he was messing about and just carried on messing about, even though he was told to stop and he got a red card.³¹ [...]
- Ryan: He never does his work.
- Patrick: In history, she [7C's history teacher] lets him do anything.
- Ryan: [Imitating Jason] 'why did they have a battle?' [Imitating the teacher] 'because I said so.' [Imitating Jason] 'why did the Romans fight the,' you know...

(Pupil Interview)

The teaching assistant's initial report suggested Jason's "autism should not prevent his overall educational development at Goldsworth," but this view was not shared by some of 7C's teachers (Teaching assistant's report on Jason). The form-group's history teacher, who taught several Year 7 form-groups, suggested that were it not for Jason's autism, his behaviour would quickly have led to his exclusion from the school (Interview).

The impact of Jason's condition upon his behaviour and his treatment by Goldsworth's teaching staff served to mark him off as 'different' from the rest of the form-group. It is possible to use his relationships with his peers as a means to view some of the processes surrounding two instances of polarisation among the boys of 7C. The suggestion is not that Jason was the sole *cause* of polarisation, but rather that his behaviour's breaches of the school's normal code of conduct demonstrate the competitive processes that led to polarisation. Two pupil profiles are now detailed, one from a pupil towards the 'bottom' of the form-group, Stuart, and another from the 'top,' Michael.

³¹ The red card room was set-aside for pupils whose behaviour warranted their immediate removal from a lesson. The room was monitored by a senior member of teaching staff on duty and from where pupils may or may not be sent to the headteacher. Pupils given a red card were automatically placed on report, for which period their attendance and behaviour for every lesson was monitored.

Stuart and Michael: two examples of differentiation.

Jason went to the same feeder school as Michael and Patrick and 7C's teaching assistant identified their association gave "Jason peer credibility" as "these two are leaders in the class" (Teaching assistant's report on Jason). However, Michael and Patrick had quickly joined the Pepsi-Max group of boys (who had transferred from Lindsay School) at the beginning of the year. Jason's interest in reading (he often read during registrations periods and even walking between lessons) and his distaste for sport had distanced him from the behavioural norms of this group (Fieldnotes). In terms of pairings for activities, such as P.E. and in the light of 7C's classroom layout into pairs, Jason's distance from this group combined with Michael and Patrick's move to join them left Jason as an isolate within 7C. However, at the same time, Jason was reluctant to make a pair with the other isolate boy, Stuart:

Usually Jason and Stuart used to be the last to get partners. When Stuart used to come, Jason wasn't friendly with Jim then, they'd be the last two and Jason would go, 'I don't want to go with him, he's a smelly poo' and all this, and he wouldn't work with him.

(Patrick, Pupil Interview)

Jason's behaviour in relation to Stuart can be used to demonstrate some of the process through which the other isolate boy at the beginning of the year, Stuart, was marginalized by 7C. The boys were able to discuss their relationship with Stuart in terms of 'bullying' and they described Jason as one of the worst offenders:

Steve: [It's] getting a bit worse with Jason.

Ryan: Have you seen *The Echo* [a local newspaper], all about Stuart?

Steve: He went out for three months.

Patrick: It's Jason and a bit of Steve.

Steve: Shut up! I bullied him for about a week.

Patrick: No, but it's mainly Jason.

Steve: Yeah, and you're defending him!

Ryan: Every time, when Stuart did come into school, Jason was saying, 'how ya doing, trampo?'

(Pupil Interview)

The techniques of exclusion included verbal insults and derogatory nicknames directed towards Stuart, such as Jason's above. Other techniques included the Pepsi-Max group hid Stuart's bag and kicked it around the room, their refusal to share their equipment with him and their reluctance to include him in their groups (Fieldnotes). Less direct social situations also contributed to Stuart's differentiation from his form-group. For instance, the recreation of established friendship *pairings* inside 7C, for example between Jim and Bavesh, reinforced pupils who had transferred alone sense of isolation, as there were no other isolates among the boys who were willing to form new partnerships. Expressed another way, 7C merely continued the friendship pairings, or groups, pupils had been working in at different feeder schools, in the context of a new school and a new form-group. These continuing associations therefore provided a subtle means by which Stuart was prevented from forming new, regular partnerships inside 7C. Dave M.'s association with Stuart at the beginning of the year (continuing a friendship from feeder school) had declined through Dave M.'s increasing involvement with Steve and the Pepsi-Max group of boys and Stuart's extended absence from the school. By the end of the year, whereas new friendship groupings had become established, Stuart's isolation had been reinforced. The impact of these forms of exclusion upon Stuart can be seen, not only in his absence from school, but also when he ran out of lessons after he was excluded from the boys' groups for a team activity (Fieldnotes). Indeed, it is difficult to criticise the local newspaper's suggestion that Stuart was bullied at Goldsworth (albeit not physically), considering the treatment he received from his peers in 7C.

The circumstances surrounding Stuart reveal a profile of exclusion on several levels. Stuart's poor academic ability distanced him from the characteristics of the high

achieving and studiously orientated boys and Jason's behaviour also prevented the formation of partnerships with boys in a similarly isolated position in terms of background at different feeder schools. These systems of exclusion collectively differentiated Stuart from his peers. The distinctions the boys set up among themselves even included appearance. The fashion among the boys at the time was towards very close-cropped haircuts and, whilst Stuart's haircut was short, he was ridiculed for looking as though he had not combed his hair (Fieldnotes). Stuart was therefore distanced from two conventional sources of status within 7C, academic ability and membership of one of the popular friendship groupings.

There is one aspect in Stuart's progressive polarisation from his peers in 7C that does not hold with the differentiation-polarisation theory model. Differentiation-polarisation theory suggests Stuart's isolation would further contribute to the formation of an anti-school attitude, yet this was not the case in terms of his behaviour inside the classroom. Stuart's absence from school indicates an anti-school outlook, yet his *behaviour* later in the year *did not* further polarise towards more extreme forms of anti-school behaviour. He remained quiet and withdrawn inside the classroom when compared to his peers. Stuart's resistance towards schooling was therefore expressed in a passive sense, of failure to complete homework and non-attendance than more direct forms of disruption. The differentiation-polarisation model is supported, however, by offering a contrasting profile to Stuart's. The theory holds that the pressures pupils experience inside school are more intense at the ends of the bi-polar model. Stuart's status inside 7C stands in complete contrast to Michael's and differentiation-polarisation theory allows the tensions both pupils experienced to be observed.

Lambart (1982) and Lacey (1970) were able to draw upon formal sources of differentiation. For Lacey (1970), these included pupil rankings and, for Lambart (1982), the circumstances surrounding the election of a form representative. The system inside Goldsworth did not have such formal processes, nevertheless there was considerable competition inside 7C. In contrast to Stuart, Michael was perceived to be the most popular boy in 7C. Jim, for instance, had described him as “one of the wise men” of the form-group (Pupil Interview). Michael was also perceived by his teachers to be a “clearly hardworking and ambitious” pupil and this was also evident in his behaviour in lessons (Form Tutor Interview, Fieldnotes). Michael often called out the answers in lessons (when the expectation was for pupils to raise their hands and wait to be asked) and compared his marks against his peers (Fieldnotes). Following one R.E. test, he had joked to Patrick who had beaten him by a mark, “you’re not my friend anymore” (Fieldnotes). He was also an exceptionally cue-conscious pupil (Delamont *et al* 1997). For example, Michael once asked Miss Gibson if ‘A’ was the highest mark possible for the work they were doing and another time he asked one of 7C’s French teachers what was required to get the highest mark in a French oral assessment (Fieldnotes).

Michael’s popularity and academic success at Goldsworth was, according to his peers, newfound. Patrick argued, “at Barton County [their previous school] Michael didn’t have many friends [...] going to Goldsworth’s given him a new chance” (Pupil Interview). Michael’s behaviour revealed his sensitivity towards maintaining his position as one of the leading pupils inside his new form-group. One example was a lesson in which 7C was given a choice of watching a video or having a drama lesson

(Fieldnotes). Patrick had suggested a vote and Michael had pointed out it was not Patrick's place to speak for the group and Steve complained Michael had himself just made the same suggestion a minute ago (Fieldnotes). This incident captures two dynamics. First, Michael's sensitivity to other's adopting informal leadership roles and, second, the competitive environment inside 7C. The pupils had formed their own internal hierarchies within the form-group, through such techniques as pointing out after tests, "I was right and he was wrong" (Jason, Fieldnotes). Jason's role in 7C, and particularly his relationship with Michael, can again be used to demonstrate how Michael's pro-school and competitive outlook influenced his associations in 7C.

In February, the school informed 7C about Jason's disability and a member of the autism society came to address the form-group.³² Michael's relationship with Jason came to shift over the year. His loose association, in terms of sharing teams for group activities changed when Michael withdrew from interacting with Jason (Fieldnotes). I heard informally, this was on the suggestion of Michael's mother and Michael advised his friends to do the same (Fieldnotes). Jason, in turn, came to perceive two sides to Michael, "charismatic" at moments, but cold and uncooperative at others (Pupil Interview). Michael's pro-school outlook and his sense of identity as one of 7C's 'top' boys therefore not only shaped his behaviour in lessons, but also his friendships. One final incident captures how Stuart and Michael's different outlooks also affected their behaviour out of the classroom. 7C played football against another Year 7 form-group at lunchtime and there were often arguments during the games, as they were not formally refereed. Michael distanced himself from the physical

32 See Appendix VI for a copy of the handout given to each member of 7C. The handout outlined some of the behavioural traits surrounding autism. It is from the handout that the description of autism as a 'disability' that has been used here.

conflicts that occasionally occurred, even on one occasion when he was directly and individually provoked (Fieldnotes). Stuart, in similar situations, had several scuffles (Fieldnotes). These two boys therefore demonstrate the two ends of the polarisation model and the different forms of behaviour their respective statuses inside 7C produced and subsequently reinforced over the course of the year.

Michael and Stuart have been used to describe two instances of polarisation among the boys in 7C. Their peers shared the tensions and pressures in their experience of schooling at Goldsworth. The informal hierarchies within 7C, such as who sat with whom and access to friendship groups, were intensely experienced. I witnessed Dave P. in tears when he was excluded from Liam's group in an English lesson after Liam had told him they did not always have to work together (Fieldnotes, Pupil Interview). Similarly Gareth when he broke his arm during the year and was forced to sit out of the football games among the boys experienced forms of teasing and exclusion from the Pepsi-Max group of boys.

The girls in 7C: involvement and distance.

The processes of differentiation particular to the girls took a slightly different form to that of the boys. The polarisations among the girls again revolved around friendship associations and disputes. They arose from *individual* disagreements and over a variety of issues, yet the result was again polarising when it clarified the girls' friendship networks. These conflicts and competitions are described through several vignettes. Vignettes reveal something of the character and situations underpinning the disputes and their escalation. They are taken from different contexts and situations, but all address a similar theme.

Vignette 1.

The group A girls were perceived to be the most popular girls in 7C and they were also the most academically successful group among the girls (Pupil Interviews, School records, Fieldnotes). The first vignette details Kate's relationship with the group A girls and how her quarrels with its core members led to her exclusion from the group.

Nicola was a central member of the group A girls and described an early disagreement (Fieldnotes, Pupil Interview). She had had a 'sleepover' at her house with Helen P., Kate and Verity to celebrate her birthday. There had been a quarrel at the sleepover when, according to Nicola's report, Kate had said that she hated Natalie. The argument had carried over into school and both Natalie and Helen P. (her closest friendship pairing within the form-group) had fallen out with Kate. A further dispute was provoked among the group A girls, when Kate had asked Nicola to be secret best friends and therefore to ignore Nicola's friendship with Verity. Whatever Kate's motivations in her actions, the result was her permanent ostracism from the group A girls, for instance, in their seating arrangements and group activities (Fieldnotes). The wider impact of the disputes was polarisation of the wider friendship networks among the girls. This was in two senses. First, it confirmed the friendship between girls from different feeder schools inside group A and, second and at the same time, it distinguished this group from the girls whom Kate then began to associate with. This was particularly so for Rosie, who emerged as a regular pairing with Kate (Fieldnotes, Pupil Interviews). The second vignette concentrates upon a context, rather than a particular source of conflict. It attempts to show some of the specific processes

through which the girls' disputes escalated and which came to involve some of the boys.

Vignette 2.

7C's Thursday afternoon Art lesson was notorious for its fallouts and disputes. The character of their Art lessons differed in a number of ways from the rest of their timetable. It was their only double period lesson during the week and it also involved a great deal of pupil movement around the room, for example, to collect building or drawing material or to seek help from their teacher. The physical layout of the room also differed. Pupils' desks were arranged facing one another and talking was permitted during activities. The layout of the classroom, its organisation and duration therefore allowed pupils far more interaction than in any other lesson.

The sources of the disputes were difficult to explicitly identify, but the conversations involved both genders and pupils' friendship associations:

- Bob: The girls are really annoying. [...]
Gareth: They're sort of like Liam with their moods. You like say one thing to them and they'll go into a mood. I can't remember, you know Liam and Michael and everyone, they used to say to the girls I called Verity lanky and Nicola a blonde bimbo when I [...] don't, I don't say that.
Bob: Well you did to me, but not to them. [...] You called Harriet, um...
Gareth: Mickey Mouse. [...]
Bob: I don't like any of them. I don't like Lisa, Harriet or Emily.
Gareth: Lisa's horrible. She like says, [adopting a high voice] 'shut up or I'll batter ya!' And pulls a stupid face.

(Pupil Interview)

Whatever the original issue under debate, the conversations revealed the networks of friendship and support pupils drew upon from their form-group peers. The boys detailed some of the processes:

Patrick: When people start crying, Rosie, say for instance, Kate, she cries the most.

Tony: No, Natalie.

Patrick: Yeah, and when they start crying, people take sides. They go to their friends and say 'are you alright?' or 'I didn't do it, it was her fault' and for the next two days there are two sides and like...

Tony: And sometimes the boys get told off, for doing nothing!

Patrick: And we can't...the atmosphere's gone and everything. How are we supposed to get on with girls that don't like each other?

(Pupil Interview)

The process of these arguments involved disputes over who said what, followed by refutation and counter-refutation. However, the consequences of these conflicts were not as trivial as the example of name-calling suggests. For instance, Kate's friendship with Rosie deteriorated to a degree that Rosie's sister in Year 8 arrived outside 7C's Art classroom one afternoon demanding to talk to Kate, after which Rosie left in tears and her mother later visited the school (Fieldnotes). The substance of the girls' arguments becomes less important when used as a means through which to see the friendship networks among the girls. The roles of different friendship associations in the conflicts have a bearing upon the resulting polarisation inside 7C. The relation of pro and anti-school attitudes to the polarised groups inside 7C does not correspond with the differentiation-polarisation model.

Vignette 3: Role distance.

Three friendship groups emerged among the girls over the year. The two vignettes above revealed that the girls in groups A and C were central in their disputes. However, one girl towards the periphery of group A, Helen C., and the core members of group B remained distanced from the disputes. The characteristics of these girls and their ability to remain detached from the conflicts dividing the other girls are now discussed.

Helen C., the periphery member of group A girls, was described by her form tutor as a quiet pupil (Form tutor Interview). Like her friends in group A, she was pro-school in outlook and performed well in class and in tests results, yet not to a level above the group A girls (Fieldnotes, School records). I have no record of her receiving any individual detentions or even verbal reprimands from staff (Fieldnotes, School Records).

One vignette during a particularly turbulent Art lesson captures her distance from the girls' disputes. I had sat next to her and asked her what the girls were arguing about that day. She had shrugged and replied she had lost track of the disagreements herself (Fieldnotes). My observations in the classroom revealed a similar pattern. Helen C. was not involved in the arguments the girls had in class, such as passing on information between the girls during lessons (Fieldnotes).

Helen C.'s distance from the conflicts can be understood in terms of her comparatively low status inside the group A girls. Her average ability across the curriculum and in sports, combined with her quiet personality, distanced her from the extremes of their hierarchical competitions. She was neither one of 7C's brightest and most popular girls nor socially or academically isolated. The result can be seen in lessons where pupils' selected their own groups, she neither led a group nor was excluded from a group because of an earlier dispute (Fieldnotes).

In contrast to one of the quietest girls in 7C, two of the loudest, Lisa and Harriet were also towards the periphery of the girls' disputes. Lisa and Harriet formed the core of

the group B girls. They regularly shared cooperation groups inside lessons with the girls from both groups A and C and were therefore aware of the arguments taking place. However, the consistency and closeness between Lisa and Harriet's friendship pairing that detached them from the other girls' disputes. As Lisa commented, "you feel stupid, stuck in the middle, but me and Harriet stay friends" (Pupil Interview).

Whilst the girls were not characterised by the same level of academic competition as Michael was among the boys, Lisa and Harriet's academic position in the lower half of 7C meant they were not in competition with the brightest girls of the form-group, Verity and Nicola. As a result, Lisa and Harriet's friendship pairing acted as a form of 'haven' from the competitions surrounding membership of the larger friendship groups between the girls.

Conclusion.

The chapter began with a group of pupils making the transition to senior school. The concern of the fieldwork was to explore differentiation-polarisation theory's argument that pupil attitudes towards schooling change as they encounter and are positioned inside the social system of a school. The theory originated through research into the impact of formal sources of differentiation, such as setting, streaming and banding. The case study school investigated here did not formally differentiate pupils, yet in the absence of *formal* differentiation, a combination of the internal organisation of the school and *informal* differentiation created a differentiation-polarisation effect.

Three phases of research unravelled this process. The case study school's allocation procedures designed each form-group to represent the range of academic abilities inside the school. The research also revealed the school's catchment included pupils

from both affluent and deprived backgrounds. As such, the school and its organisation created a diverse range of academic abilities inside every form-group, more so than would be present in a streaming or setting system.

The school's allocation procedure also included a degree of social engineering.

Where possible, the school retained pupils' friendship groupings from their feeder schools. The school drew its intake from nineteen different feeder schools, however, only five schools provided the core intake. In the case of the form-group studied here, one large contingent of boys transferred together from not only the same feeder school, but also the same form-group. The teaching timetable in their new school reinforced the unit of the form-group, by teaching pupils in their form-groups for the entire year. This served to reinforce existing friendship groups and pairs that had transferred together and provided an immediate support network for some pupils. The pupils who had transferred alone therefore entered the school in a form of deficit in comparison to their peers.

In the early stages of the year, the social geography and organisation of lessons (such as working with neighbours or in self-selected groups) also reinforced and perpetuated existing friendship groups. In the first few months, pupils developed a working knowledge of their peers' academic, social and behavioural characteristics. New academic subjects and different teaching staff offered pupils an opportunity to develop specialisms in particular subjects and therefore sources of status. For example, pupils' own specialism(s) or aptitudes to emerge (such as sport or drawing). As the year progressed, after a series of disputes over access to the most popular networks, existing friendships were reinforced or disbanded and new associations

emerged. The competition between friendship groups reinforced the behavioural characteristics of the members of each group and further differentiated the group from other groups with different behavioural norms.

Distinctive friendship patterns were visible within the form-group, which were characterised by (pro or anti) attitudes towards schooling, behaviour and different academic abilities. Academic ability also served to define who pupils considered to be the most popular pupils in the form-group. As a result, even within a mixed-ability system, some pupils emerge to become “more equal than others,” either in terms of high academic ability or as members of a larger friendship network (Orwell 1987:90). The form-group’s friendship networks had therefore created a hierarchy, in which the most popular and academically successful, pro-school pupil groups were positioned at the top, and the isolated, low-achieving pupils towards the bottom. Pupils *without* a friendship network and without a particular aptitude or ability were therefore restricted from both social and academic status rewards.

Pupils’ own intra-set hierarchy of friendship groups therefore acted as the ‘new’ source of differentiation. A polarising effect was produced by competition over access to, or to retain, membership of the most popular groups. Competition was most intense towards the ends of the spectrum, that is, for pupils invested in maintaining their status at the top of 7C’s internal hierarchy and for those at the bottom, who were repeatedly excluded from status rewards. The existence of friendship groupings inside the form-group created two forms of polarisation, in the form-group as a whole and at a further, meso-level *inside* each friendship group. Meso-level differentiation pressures were positive and negative. Negative, in the

sense that pupils risked ostracism from their group if they deviated from the group's academic and behavioural norms and positive, in that core membership of friendship networks also offered a source of protection and distance from conflicts between or inside other groups.

The existence of meso-level differentiation-polarisation runs counter to the bi-polar nature of differentiation-polarisation theory. The majority of pupils were positioned between the two extremes, which suggests a less severe form of polarisation than the original three studies that underpin the original theory. It also suggests that the theory does not represent the experience of the majority of pupils. Meso-level differentiation-polarisation allows all pupils to be seen to contribute to the differentiation-polarisation process, whilst recognising some forms of differentiation *do not* produce a polarising process. Differentiation can both provide protection against polarisation *and* produce a polarising effect. This supports previous research into differentiation-polarisation theory, which revealed the supporting role peer networks can play, both in terms of intellectual help (Abraham 1989) and protection from disciplinary sanctions (Lambart 1976).

A further clarification of the thesis' support of differentiation-polarisation theory is that the theory's prediction of behavioural change as a result of polarisation was not identified in the fieldwork. The pupils who were *not* located at the extremes of the model simultaneously exhibited both pro and anti-school behaviour, as the system of the school is not sufficiently coherent or consistent to *force* their acquiescence – one way or the other. Registration time came to be used for last minute homework. Pupils learnt how to by-pass prefects to gain entry to the building during break and

lunch through excuses such as visiting the toilets or staff room. These pupils are not “hooligans” offering acts of resistance (Delamont 2000:95, Willis 1977), nor instances of pupil agency or empowerment. They are examples of pupils operating *within* the norms of the school, if not entirely *by* them. It is a more strategic understanding and use of the school’s code of behaviour than the determinism inherent in the pro-anti, bi-polar model.

To conclude, the pressures of membership or exclusion from peer groupings are the ‘new’ source of differentiation and polarisation, yet careful provisos must be placed around the implicit suggestion that the differentiation-polarisation process is independent from the systems of the school. The micro-political decisions of the contemporary comprehensive case study school *directly* affected the future dynamics of the one form-group studied.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION-POLARISATION THEORY.

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right.

(Geertz 1973:29)

The approach.

The thesis used the trials of fieldwork practice and the challenge to devise strategies in the field to develop an approach to theory cumulation through ethnography. The development of the approach rested on a two stage process. The first of these involved the identification of one example of theory cumulation achieved using an ethnographic research process. This was followed by an analysis of how the theory may be further developed using new fieldwork. The second stage involved a new ethnographic school case study, which would attend to the conclusions of the first stage. The success of the approach to theory cumulation used by the thesis therefore depends upon the decisions made during both stages. The approach in relation to the first and second stages of theoretical development of differentiation-polarisation is evaluated in this chapter. That is, *how* the thesis has used ethnography to contribute to the cumulative development of sociological theory. The concluding chapter of the thesis addresses the more general question of *what* ethnography can contribute to the cumulative development of sociological theory, or if theory tends to dominate the theory-method dialectic in ethnography.

Stage 1.

An example of positive theory cumulation using an ethnographic research process was identified in the sub-discipline of the Sociology of Education. The theory, differentiation-polarisation theory, was developed through three ethnographic school case studies. Two of these had been designed to evaluate State secondary education in the mid nineteen sixties and the third studied the comprehensive system in its early form in the late nineteen seventies.

The original three studies represented an ideal selection for the purposes of the thesis for several reasons. Primarily, this was due to their shared findings across the different types of secondary education systems in place at the time and also because they collectively confirmed one another's findings. For example, the studies' original focus was upon *formal* sources of differentiation (such as setting, streaming and banding). However, each author innovated and refined this objective. Lacey located his school within the community, coming to understand the school as the key means of access to the professions for the local middle-class community. Hargreaves and Lacey both broke new ground by conceptualising the school as a social system in its own right. Ball then developed this further by revealing the school was also a site of micro-political conflict. Additional research following Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's work also contributed refinements. Lambart concentrated upon micro-level, peer interactional networks. Abraham introduced the concept of intra-set streaming, which considered *informal* sources of differentiation to be as critical as *formal* sources (such as setting, streaming and banding) in creating a differentiation-polarisation process. The development of differentiation-polarisation theory by later studies also acted to support the objective of the thesis to further refine the theory.

Differentiation-polarisation theory's case to be considered to be theory produced through an ethnographic research process was evaluated. Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's studies were criticised for the importance they placed upon non-observational data. For example, the definition of contemporary ethnography provided in chapter one considered participant observation to be at the centre of ethnographic research. However, this criticism was counter-balanced when the methods underpinning the generation of differentiation-polarisation theory were placed in their historical context. Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's use of a case study approach and ethnographic methods to research the education system was groundbreaking at the time. However, the rising acceptance and popularity of ethnographic research methods after their work (indeed, to which they contributed), the bi-polar division between qualitative and quantitative techniques has diminished. Therefore, a contemporary definition of ethnography no longer precludes the use of quantitative techniques. In addition, as the different forms of qualitative analysis demonstrated in chapter two by Geertz, Wieder, Pryce and Goffman show, any variety of material can be legitimately used to inspire the ethnographic imagination. Therefore, the shift in the methodological landscape following Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's research permits greater latitude than has previously been the case.

The establishment of ethnography as the dominant paradigm in some sub-disciplines at the same time permits a move to focus upon a smaller sample. In terms of theory development, without the wider framework of differentiation-polarisation theory and the establishment of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's research findings, it is unlikely that the results of my own field research could alone be considered to be theoretical in the

same manner as differentiation-polarisation theory. Hence the thesis relies on and benefits from developments in methodological debates in recent years and upon the credibility of an existing theory to lend authority to its own conclusions, based on a smaller-scaled ethnography than the three, original studies.

The remit of my analysis of differentiation-polarisation theory was not simply to confirm, or reject, differentiation-polarisation theory in new fieldwork study, but to devise an approach through which the theory may be developed further. In my challenge to devise an aspect of differentiation-polarisation theory to develop further, I followed a line of innovation present in the original studies. Ball had already identified that mixed-ability teaching in a comprehensive school produced a differentiating-polarising effect, albeit in a less extreme form than in a banded system. In addition, Abraham also identified that differentiation-polarisation occurred *before* pupils were formally differentiated by the school system. However, in their analyses both Ball and Abraham retained the original theory's emphasis upon the importance of *formal* sources of differentiation. Their contribution towards the refinement of differentiation-polarisation theory rested on their confirmation of its presence, but without the strong, causal link with *formal* sources of differentiation. Therefore, they had indirectly indicated the presence of *informal* sources of differentiation. For example, Ball identified that the curriculum became a source of differentiation, by teaching pupils to different levels inside the classroom and through subject-option 'choices,' which were monitored and directed by teaching staff. Abraham found differentiation could occur on a meso-level, such as inside a mixed-ability form-group where differences in academic ability were more extreme than in a setted or streamed group. There are instances where the social organisation of the school continued to

polarise pupils, but in different ways to the original theory's emphasis upon streaming, setting and banding.

I used their re-conceptualisation of the very processes of differentiation as a precedent for my analysis of the literature surrounding differentiation-polarisation theory. This was an important move in theoretical terms, as it moved away from the original studies' focus on the impact of *formal* differentiation, to emphasise and explore the impact (and, indeed, the very definition) of *informal* processes of differentiation as well. My focus remained upon the central precept of the theory – attitude change as a result of encountering the systems of a school – but to a certain degree rejected the key *causality* of attitude change. The concern to add to differentiation-polarisation theory, rather than merely confirm its presence, therefore entailed quite a dramatic shift in focus from the original studies generating the theory. It was the concern for theory cumulation, rather than confirmation, that necessitated this shift.

The success of the thesis, however, depended upon the capacity of the fieldwork to achieve the objective to develop theory in practice. For, as the methodological literature acknowledges, putting research principles into practice is rarely a straightforward process. The second stage of the chapter now evaluates my original fieldwork's contribution to answering how ethnography can contribute to the cumulative development of sociological theory.

Stage 2. The fieldwork.

In the thirty years that have followed Hargreaves and Lacey's research, comprehensive schools have become the dominant form of State secondary education.

However, whilst the comprehensive movement was most easily associated with mixed-ability teaching, the comprehensivisation has not seen an end to formal systems of differentiation. That is, comprehensive schools have retained a degree of autonomy over their internal organisation and as such there was still considerable scope for individual schools to apply organisational systems such as setting, streaming or banding. The selection of my own fieldwork site was therefore vitally important if I was to successfully challenge the new analytic directions I had identified in stage one.

The school represented an ideal research site to challenge my questions in many respects. The size of the school matched that of Beachside Comprehensive and its catchment reflected the full diversity of the local area, whereas in Quine's (1974) two comprehensives, the brightest pupils had been 'creamed off' by a local grammar school. Similarly, Beachside's headteacher identified that the school did not reflect "the full socio-economic spectrum" as it lacked pupils "from cultured backgrounds" (Ball 1981:14). However, in one key respect Goldsworth differed from Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's case study schools.

The school did not formally differentiate pupils by setting system until pupils were in their third year at the school. Even at this point, it was a partial form of differentiation. That is, setting only took place in certain subjects (Maths and Modern Languages) and this was also dependent upon pupil numbers and the logistical restrictions of the timetable.

In this respect, the internal organisation of my case study school was neither universally mixed-ability, nor straightforward in its application of a differentiated system. My analysis of differentiation-polarisation theory had also refined my focus onto the intake year of the school, that is, the first point at which they would be influenced by the social system of the school. The decision to study the youngest cohort was therefore necessary to explore the process of differentiation and attitude change *as* (and if) it occurred, rather than calculating its extent in older, more established pupil cohorts (cf. Abraham 1989).

The case study school's intake year was taught in mixed-ability groups throughout the first year (Year 7). Whilst this precluded my research from studying the impact of *formal* differentiated systems, it complemented the coverage of previous research into school organisations. Hargreaves, Lacey and Lambart evaluated the impact of different systems of formal differentiation. Ball had compared a banded system with a mixed-ability system and Abraham had studied undifferentiated pupils and then the impact of formal differentiation when it was introduced in the senior years of the school. In addition, Ball captured a school in the process of adjusting to mixed-ability teaching. My own research took place in an established comprehensive in which the remit to explore and define alternative sources of differentiation was fully met by the absence of formal systems in Year 7. My case study school presented an opportunity to challenge to the full Ball and Abraham's claim that differentiation-polarisation occurred in mixed-ability groupings by studying pupils from their point of entry into a school and not later in their school career when they would have already been shaped by the system of a school. Indeed, I would not have been able to study any *informal* systems of differentiation when, or if, they developed.

The decision to study the youngest cohort at Goldsworth held important implications for the kind of data I was able to collect and the rapport I was able to establish with my sample population. One of the improvements I sought to introduce in my own field work over that of Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball related to my research role. My concern was to avoid the authoritarian characteristics ascribed to adults in schools that Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball had inherited by assuming teaching roles in their schools. I had sought guidance on how to position myself in school from existing school case studies that adopted non-teaching research roles. Delamont (1984) describes how she arranged interviews with the girls outside the school at a friend's flat. Llewellyn (1980) assumed the role of a pupil, sharing cigarettes in the school toilets and attending social outings with her research sample. However, the decision before the fieldwork began to focus on the *youngest* cohort of the school made both such approaches impractical. I was researching eleven year-olds, rather than sixth formers or fifth years (fifteen year-olds). I adapted my approach by using three strategies, those of assuming a 'least adult' role, the technique of selective disattention and by adopting the role of a curious friend.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I became privy to many pupils' private thoughts and feelings and successfully engaged in detailed conversations with all of the pupils in my sample, yet I found it impossible to reject the ascribed status of adult in school and I was ethically bound to intervene in certain situations. Whilst I often used the authority I held as an adult in school to the benefit of pupils, such as jumping the dinner queues and escorting pupils back into school (when they were not permitted on their own), I remained an adult researcher attached to their form-group. I was called

on to help, even in situations where I assumed I was unobtrusive. For example, when a player went down injured during a lunchtime football game I was watching with other pupils on the sideline, the pupils immediately looked to me for help and I, of course, intervened immediately.

The rapport I was able to establish with the pupils also suffered from a generation gap in terms of a lack of shared, cultural references. Whilst I was able to discuss their hobbies and interests (such as computer gaming strategies) in a relatively informed way, I often missed the mark by not understanding their terminology or by pitching my questions at too high a level for them to understand. My relationship with the form-group was best characterised as a form of mascot or supervisor, rather than a neutral observer at the back of the room or a researcher who joined in every task alongside the pupils. I remained a pseudo-teacher, the kind of person who pupils asked, as Jon once did, to help undo their coat when the zip got jammed.

A more serious concern arose when I found that the academic development of the pupils restricted the types of data I could collect. My intention to ask the form-group to keep diaries provides an example. On pupils' first day in school, their form tutor asked them to write a short essay, which I analysed in comparison with another Year 7 form-group's. The essays provided an interesting data set, yet there was a considerable discrepancy in the standard of the scripts, as the pupils were not equally able to express themselves in writing. Whilst this reinforced that my sample form-group did indeed contain the diversity of abilities I had sought to study, my later attempt in a P.S.E. lesson when I asked pupils to produce a written *and* pictorial account of their views on the school was similarly unsuccessful. I therefore

abandoned my intention to ask the form-group to keep diaries, as I needed to access all pupils' experiences to the same level of detail to represent the views of the whole form-group, rather than just the most eloquent or academically able.

This challenged one of my motivations at the outset of the research to 'give voice' to the pupils and to see and understand their experience of schooling. I was disappointed in the level of reflection and depth of conversation I was able to achieve with pupils in interviews. An example is the failure of the fieldwork to unravel exactly the disputes underpinning the clashes between the girls. As a result, the pupils I was able to discuss and reflect on the development of the form-group became key 'gatekeepers' in the research and I came to rely upon these pupils far more than other members of my sample. I found that I spoke most often with Steve, Jim and Harriet. Therefore my account draws upon their interpretations and accounts to a greater degree than the rest of their form-group.

I was, however, able to adapt my methodology in response to the problems I encountered in the field. For example, Ball created during the course of his fieldwork a 'Guess-Who-Test,' which outlines a series of characteristics and asks pupils who they think best matches those characteristics. I modified this technique in my own interviews, for example, asking pupils whom they thought was the brightest member of the form-group, who was the most popular and why and which pupils or members of staff they felt best able to discuss a problem with.

I also relied more heavily upon what I felt to be secondary indicators, gathered through my observational work, than I had anticipated. These included seating

patterns, teams formed for group activities, and break and lunchtime friendship groups. Whilst these forms of data offered points of comparison and collectively provided the indicators of differentiation forming the basis of my support of differentiation-polarisation theory, I felt that I had been unable to grasp the interactional and informal sources of differentiation in sufficient depth. The chapter's opening quotation by Geertz captures my sense of having got "somewhere with the matter at hand" but at the same time only intensifying my "suspicion [...] that you are not quite getting it right" (Geertz 1973:29).

Concepts of social class were another issue that I found difficult to translate into contemporary field research. Social class was one of the crucial variables underpinning differentiation-polarisation theory.³³ Differentiation-polarisation theory correlates social class against a series of data, such as test scores, pupils' individual school files, attendance records, pupil diaries, sociomatrices and pupil and teacher interviews. My own research sought to consider with the impact of social class upon interactions inside the classroom. However, Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's method of identifying pupils' social classes is problematic in the light of social changes that have taken place over the past thirty years.

Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball relied upon father's occupation and the Registrar General's classification system to define pupils' social class background. Abraham (1995) and Lambart (1976) encountered difficulties similar to my own in categorising pupils by social class in the context of changes in the nature of social and family relations in contemporary Britain. For example, Lambart (1976) found several of her

³³ Indeed, social class was one of the main sociological concerns during the time differentiation-polarisation theory was generated.

sample's group's parents were separated, divorced or remarried. This paralleled my own sample, in which seven (in a sample of twenty-eight) pupils' parents were divorced or separated. Another boys' parents also separated during the course of the fieldwork. As one pupil explained to me, he lived with his mother and her husband, "but he's not my dad" (Fieldnotes). Abraham (1996) was only able to categorise sixty-one pupils (forty-eight per cent) of his sample, "due to incompleteness in records, father's unemployment or in some cases lack of father" (Abraham 1996:36). Abraham used school records to provide this information, whereas I relied upon the descriptions pupils' provided of their parents' occupations as the school records did not hold this information (and indeed the information available in pupils' files was also extremely inconsistent).

Therefore, in the context of changing procedures for defining social class thirty years on from Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey's (1970) studies, I found it impossible to represent pupils' social class category with the same clarity. The correlations of social class to pro- and anti-school attitudes are therefore far less prominent in my own work than within Hargreaves, Lacey and Ball's. Nevertheless, to the degree that it was possible to align social class background with pro and anti-school attitudes towards schooling, particularly using only a non-manual and manual occupation dichotomy, my research supports differentiation-polarisation theory's suggestion that pro-school and academically successful pupils were disproportionately from middle-class backgrounds.

My suggestion is that nuances in the social, historical and intellectual timing of the 'theory' complicate a model for theory development. My own agenda for

differentiation-polarisation theory narrowed the issues I was prepared to address in the research, inevitably to the detriment of alternative directions and approaches. This was both during the fieldwork and the type of theory I could develop. For example, one direction would have been to evaluate the changes the relatively new headteacher had implemented in the school, which was a salient concern for staff at all levels inside Goldsworth. This could have used the entirely different research style of an action research project. Alternative theoretical developments within the Sociology of Education would have been the postmodern turn in theory, which authors such as Stronach have explored (Stronach 1997, 1999, Stronach and MacLure 1997). My avoidance of alternative methodologies and theories therefore imposed a restriction upon the exploratory potential of my focus in the field and also the theoretical territories I could enter. Whilst the research was successful in supporting differentiation-polarisation theory and refining the theory by expanding the notion of differentiation, it achieved this by following a model of theory cumulation more in line with Hammersley's (1985) proposal for theory cumulation. That is, the same model which was critiqued for its conservatism in earlier chapters. The selection of differentiation-polarisation theory as a case study for developing theory through ethnography therefore carried far more restrictions than my textual analysis appreciated. Rather it locked the research into a particular genre of ethnographic research and epistemology, not a puritanical form of ethnography, but a traditional one.

In complete contrast, of course, to my awareness of how my theoretical aims dominated my work was an opposing concern. That is, the even greater risk that by re-working of differentiation-polarisation theory I metaphorically threw the baby out

with the bathwater. Quite simply, recognising that replicating ethnographic research does not simply equate with the continuation of their ideas. Ball (1993) cites Freeman's (1983) recreation of Margaret Mead's (1928) study as one such example. My own research simultaneously looked forward (to develop the theory) and backwards (to the inheritance of that theory). The focus upon differentiation-polarisation theory therefore both required a steadfast commitment to the cause and a punitive fear of straying.

The theoretic agenda of my own research distinguishes it from other ethnographies, which are less concerned to develop theory. For example, my own research was not an independent exploration of the behavioural norms and codes of pupils in secondary school and, as such, it is not an independent ethnography in its own right. Therefore, the *authority* and the ultimate claim to *validity* upon which my own research rests differ from that of other ethnographies. That is, its focus of differentiation-polarisation theory acts as a form of exemption from evaluation as an independent ethnography. At the same time, however, it opens a door to criticism in relation to its pursuit of differentiation-polarisation theory. For instance, if Quine had not been so concerned with testing differentiation-polarisation theory, could his findings have been subjected to the same degree of criticism by Abraham and, in chapter four here? We could even ask if Quine had *supported* or even refined the theory, would Ball then have seen fit to incorporate Quine's work into his study at Beachside Comprehensive?

The approach used by the thesis has proved to be successful as a technique for developing differentiation-polarisation theory. However, through its own case study, it has become a process of theorising through caveats. The findings of my own

research complements and adds to the explanatory power and depth of coverage of the original studies and that of other studies concerned with differentiation-polarisation theory. It is therefore a positive example of theory cumulation.

The core caveat to this two-stage model for theory development lies with the restrictions of the theory used as a case study. That is, differentiation-polarisation theory is a specifically educational theory. It captures only one social context, much like the Sociology of Education is only one sub-discipline within sociology. Does this therefore imply that this level of theorising that is limited in its explanatory power? For example, my own development of the theory best captures the experience of those pupils at the extremes of the bi-polar model. In that sense, is theory that relates to schooling, such as differentiation-polarisation theory, perhaps not 'theory' in a general sense, as it relates to only one area of society? As Abraham (1996) says with an almost dangerous casualness:

Three anomalous cases cannot be explained within the theory, except in so far as one accepts that it *can only predict general tendencies and not the attitudes of every particular pupil.*

(Abraham 1989:69, my emphasis)

We have seen that one theory, differentiation-polarisation theory, can hold across a diverse number of internal organisational systems practiced currently in millions of schools throughout Britain. Then if differentiation-polarisation theory cannot be said to be theory, then the next question to arise must be, what is? In a context where the present Labour Government's recent White Paper favours a return to specialist schools and away from the idea of the 'bog standard' comprehensive, perhaps there is even greater need for a theory that successfully captures the implications of diverse systems of internal organisation. Differentiation-polarisation theory is one example

of such a theory, which my own fieldwork has found to be as relevant today as it was thirty years ago for Hargreaves and Lacey.

CONCLUSION.

*THEORISING THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHY: 'THE BUSINESS OF GROUNDED RESEARCH.'*³⁴

Introduction.

The conclusion to chapter six detailed and evaluated how one ethnography has contributed to the cumulative development of sociological theory. The final conclusion of the thesis considers the more general question of *what* ethnography can contribute to the cumulative development of sociological theory. It asks (as it has been shown in detail *how* ethnography can contribute to theory), *what* is needed for this to take place on a more regular basis than Hammersley currently perceives to be the case. The chapter looks at contemporary ethnography in the light of the demands faced in the case study of differentiation-polarisation theory to comment on what changes or caveats are necessary if theory and method in ethnography are to achieve a theoretically productive dialectic.

The important of Atkinson's Law for ethnography.

Hammersley (1998) discusses the place of unforeseen difficulties in field research. He refers to an informal 'law' his colleague, Paul Atkinson, proposes which holds that the easier a site is to access, the harder the fieldwork will prove to be. This principle, which Hammersley names Atkinson's Law, recognises that the unexpected has a place in all field research. The law captures that ethnographic work is challenging and often demands methodological improvisations. I want to use Atkinson's Law to suggest that not only does ethnographic work often demand methodological

³⁴ Ball (1993:44,45).

innovations, but also theoretical ones. My own field research certainly supports Atkinson's Law in both of these senses. However, my intention is not to follow the implicit, and somewhat negative, irony in Hammersley's portrayal of the law, but to celebrate it. Here I move beyond Hammersley's (1998) meaning, to emphasise the *benefits* of the unforeseen for the theory-method dialectic in ethnography – and particularly for the business of theorising through ethnography.

Shock tactics in field research.

The methodological literature notes the importance of fieldwork as a tool for casting a new light upon, or a new way of seeing, a given object. Through fieldwork, the researcher may be exposed to something new or unexpected. The intention is that through the 'shock' of viewing what is unusual or incongruous to your expectations, new insights may be gained.

This kind of 'fieldwork shock' can be important in taking research into new and potentially fruitful directions. However, the danger in taking a concern for theory development too far is that the fieldwork devised to take a particular theory further may reduce the potential of the fieldwork to shock pre-given expectations. For example, if the conceptual categories are already in place before fieldwork begins, to what extent can they be challenged, even rejected in a fieldwork project designed to engage with them? The danger is that excessive theoretical preoccupations may act to block avenues of development, a kind of inability to see the forest for the trees. In such situations, the capacity for the fieldwork to *shock* and challenge those preoccupations is inverted and reduced.

My argument here is that in using a pre-existing theory in a dogmatic sense can effectively reduce the fieldwork to a secondary, supporting role in terms of its potential to engage with fields of investigation and break into new theoretical territories. The danger, therefore, is that ethnographic work merely becomes a tool for confirming what pre-existing theories already know. However, contemporary ethnography does not suffer from an excessive concern with theory. As Hammersley (1992) notes, policy evaluations and grounded theory research approaches currently prevail. Therefore, the very potential ethnography can bring the theory-method dialectic is left untapped.

Intellectual communities.

One danger is that the impact of the unforeseen and unexpected may be reduced by rigidly attending to set theoretical objectives. A second danger advocates not only the importance of 'fieldwork shock,' but also a *theoretical* shock.

This relates to the intellectual community, or paradigm, in which the research takes place (Kuhn 1970). The validity and reliability of a theory gathers pace through its establishment and confirmation within intellectual research communities. For example, Lacey's (1970) initial argument in support of differentiation-polarisation theory was that the theory was firmly based upon his fieldwork results. It is only later that Lacey is able to draw upon support from later applications or adaptations to differentiation-polarisation theory. He later lists nearly half a dozen monographs that adopted comparable explorations into school social systems (Lacey and Ball 1979). Whilst these supported the differentiation-polarisation thesis, the danger arises from continuing one mode of thought, *without attendance to innovations or alternatives*.

Whilst this is not to simplistically attempt to cut across what can be quite profound epistemological differences, rather it seeks to highlight that intellectual communities serve to share and evaluate knowledge, but also champion certain modes of thought and research processes above different and alternative approaches. An example is the polarisation of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the past. Therefore, with success and establishment, innovation or divergent ideas may flounder. It is in this respect that theory can again be inspired by ethnography as a source of alternative ideas. This may be in generating a new instance of social interaction that defies easy explanation or classification or in offering the opportunity to flesh out new theoretical concepts by providing examples which aid our understanding. The sociological landscape has shifted dramatically in the years since the foundation of the first department of sociology at the University of Chicago. It is no longer possible, as even second school Chicago sociologists once did, to hold an overview of all forms and sub-disciplines of sociology (Verhoeven 1993). What is needed is a willingness to step outside the warm, reassuring glow of our own sub-disciplines of sociology to refresh and revitalise our thinking.

This observation recognises that the social, historical and intellectual timing of sociological theories are all part of theory development. Theory development is masked behind the incredibly subtle interchanges between intellectual communities, historical context in addition to theory and method. Returning to Atkinson's Law, the pervasiveness of the dialectic between intellectual communities, theory and method cannot be underestimated, nor perhaps the potential it holds for informing and inspiring innovations in research and theorising. Atkinson's Law allows the importance of shock to be seen and in the field and also in the role it can play for

challenging expectations in all too familiar intellectual territories. The law, seen in this light, adds a particularly social and human element to our reflexive understanding of the pervasiveness of the theory-method dialectic in ethnography.

There has been a danger throughout the final chapters of the thesis to lapse into a style of prescriptive, research recommendations and to offer examples of 'good practice.'

The line of thoughtful reflection upon methodological and theoretical matters in ethnography follows a familiar and perilous path. This relates to the weight attached to reflexivity in contemporary ethnography. The thesis finally moves to acknowledge the risks associated with in engaging in the sort of theoretical exegesis achieved here. Rather than end upon a positive or, far worse, bland assessment of the limitations of contemporary ethnography, the tone is more one of angry concern at the pervading sense of uncritical security.

The fetishism of reflexivity.

Reflexivity can be said to have become fetishlike when it became the gold standard of ethnographic research. This is to the extent that to exclude a discussion of reflexivity is to somehow appear to be devious or subversive. Yet with this popularity (perhaps to the extent of becoming a *topos* for ethnographic work in its own right) and the chase for ever more reflexive ethnographic work (to which this thesis contributes), the concept of reflexivity has itself lost its impact and meaning.

Reflexivity, as defined by Atkinson (1990), acts as a foil to the positivist desire for closure and competition. The conclusion of this thesis and the adaptation of Atkinson's Law both argue that complexity and the role of the unforeseen extends the

informal resources ethnographers can (indeed *should*) call upon in their work. Such a conclusion therefore adds to the ever-increasing ability of researchers to cast an all-reflexive gaze upon every aspect of the research process. It has added one further point on the reflexive checklist that every good ethnographer should have.

The acknowledgement of the fetishism of contemporary reflexivity provides a check to such infinite reflexivity. Atkinson's (1990) conception of reflexivity understands the arts and contrivances and essentially partial nature of ethnography and does so in a positive tone that retains a commitment to the knowledge that ethnographic work *can* produce. Atkinson's definition of reflexivity limits the relativism of such a statement by retaining a commitment to the production of knowledge. The case study research produced here follows this commitment. .

A call for reflexivity's "terminological retrieval" seems appropriate if ethnography is rescue reflexivity from such fetishism of method and if the concept is to regain Atkinson's meaning (Berger and Luckmann 1967:225). This is essential if ethnography is to consolidate its status as a sophisticated means of social research, theorising and knowledge production in its own right. The techniques of developing theory through ethnography and the few principles identified here may agree with the opening quotation of the thesis, in which Goffman says he is "not one to think that so far our claims can be based on magnificent accomplishment" (Goffman 1996 [1983]:261). Indeed, they may not represent the level of theoretical cumulation which may satisfy Martyn Hammersley. Yet, as a case study of theory development, some "really good conceptual distinctions" have

been made (Goffman 1996 [1983]:261). As such, it is a case of modest, rather than magnificent, accomplishment. A form of theorising – but with caveats.

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Appendices

Appendix I. 7C's pre-arrival assessment (reading test) scores and feeder school.

7C pupil	NFER-NELSON reading test 6-12 (administered July 1996 unless otherwise stated)	Feeder school
Shali	90	St. Patrick's CoE Combined
Jim	129	St. Patrick's CoE Combined
Kate	-	St. Anne's RC Primary
Sarah	No file available	No file available
Emily	90	St. Patrick's CoE Combined
Nicola	83	Onneley Middle
Helen C	-	Nocton CoE Primary
Liam	-	Lindsay Junior
Verity	111	Onneley Middle
Lisa	-	Onneley Middle
Ryan	109 (Feb 1996)	Lindsay Junior
Harriet	111	St. Patrick's CoE Combined
Jon	-	Lindsay Junior
Natalie	-	Murray Combined
Tony	120 (Feb 1996)	Lindsay Junior
Dave M	118 (Oct 1996)	Onneley Middle
Michael	-	Barton County Primary
Nathan	89 (Feb 1996)	Lindsay Junior
Bavesh	106	St. Patrick's CoE Combined
Helen P	-	Murray Combined
Dave P	89 (Feb 1996)	Lindsay Junior
Stuart	-	Onneley Middle
Jason	-	Barton County Primary & (1990+) St. Patrick's CoE Combined
Patrick	-	Barton County Primary
Gareth	122 (Feb 1996)	Lindsay Junior
Bob	109 (Feb 1996)	Lindsay Junior
Rosie	No file available	No file available
Steve	-	Barton County Primary

Appendix II. 'Code of Conduct' (Source: School Prospectus 1997-8)

As a school we recognise that we share with parents the responsibility of helping our young people to become positive and mature members of society. We also recognise that without a disciplined approach to life in school we cannot ensure that our students enjoy the secure and well-ordered environment necessary for active and effective learning. In all communities, individuals should respect the needs and feelings of others, so the one essential rule for all of us at Goldsworth School is:

- *Everyone should act with consideration and respect for others at all times.*

Behaviour within the school is based on this principle, expanded within the Code of Conduct set out in full as follows. The **Code of Conduct** deliberately emphasises positive behaviour: the aim is clearly to encourage good behaviour.

Goldsworth School 'CODE OF CONDUCT' (In Full)

1. Self Respect

Take care over the way you present yourself in school (uniform, punctuality and general behaviour).

Take care of your belongings; lockers are made available for this purpose.

Work hard, doing your best to complete classwork, homework and coursework on time.

Be proud of your achievements.

Be co-operative and trustworthy.

Think things through for yourself, don't just follow others.

2. Respect for Others

Move quietly and sensibly about the buildings, giving way to each other in crowded areas such as doorways, corridors and staircases.

Be a good listener, trying to understand other people's point of view.

Always speak politely to staff and fellow students.

Be helpful and welcoming towards visitors and people who are new to the school.

Do not bully or act in any way that is cruel or unpleasant to others.

Do not steal, damage or interfere with other people's work or property.

3. Respect for Learning

Make it as easy as possible for everyone to learn and for the teachers to teach.

Arrive on time for lessons.

Make sure that you bring everything you need for lessons.

Begin and end lessons in a courteous and orderly way.

Don't hesitate to ask teachers for help with your work, but also help each other when appropriate.

4. Respect for the School Environment

Take care of the school, so that it is a place we can all be proud to work in.

Look after the rooms and furniture, and leave them in a tidy state for others to use.

Take particular care of displays of work around the school.

Put all litter in the bins provided and do your best to make the whole school a litter-free zone.

Think about the health and safety of yourself and others both on your way to school and in your movements around the school.

Appendix III. 7C's timetable.

	<i>PERIOD 1</i>	<i>PERIOD 2</i>	<i>PERIOD 3</i>	<i>PERIOD 4</i>	<i>PERIOD 5</i>	<i>PERIOD 6</i>
<i>MON.</i>	Games	English	French	History	Music	I.T.
<i>TUES.</i>	P.S.E.	Technology	Technology	Geography	Science	English
<i>WEDS.</i>	P.E.	Drama	French	English	Maths	Science
<i>THURS.</i>	Maths	Geography	Games	History	Art	Art
<i>FRI.</i>	R.E.	Maths	English	Music	French	Science

Appendix IV. 7C's 'Maths Superstars' test results, September.

'Rank' within 7C	7C pupil	Test score (/100)
1	Michael	97
2	Tony	93
3	Gareth	82
4	Patrick	75
5	Verity	74
6	Nathan	72
7	Nicola	71
8	Bavesh	70
	Steve	70
10	Emily	67
11	Bob	65
12	Liam	64
13	Jason	63
	Shali	63
15	Rosie	61
16	Harriet	60
17	Ryan	58
18	Jon	57
19	Natalie	56
20	Helen P	48
21	Helen C	47
22	Dave M	40
23	Jim	35
24	Lisa	32
25	Dave P	28
26	Kate	27
27	Stuart	9
28	Sarah	6

Appendix V. 7C ‘ranked’ according to in-class R.E. test.

(The test was conducted in class test and peer marked.)

<i>‘Rank’</i>	<i>Pupil</i>	<i>Mark (/20)</i>
1	JIM, BAVESH	19
3	VERITY	17 ½
4	PATRICK, NATALIE	17
6	MARK	16
7	KATE, HELEN, JASON	14
10	NICOLA	13 ½
11	BOB, GARETH	13
13	NATHAN	12
14	EMILY, LIAM, HELEN C.	11
17	ROSIE, HARRIET, STUART, DAVE M.	9
21	LISA, RYAN*	8 ½
23	TONY*	5
24	SARAH	2
25	JOSH*, DAVE P.*	-

- Pupils missing part of the lesson to attend a music lesson.

Autism is...

a perplexing life-long mental disability affecting about 80,000 people in Britain today.
Isolated in a world of their own, people with autism need help to fit in.
The first step towards progress is recognition of the condition.
These pin people illustrate some ways in which autism is displayed.

Displays indifference

Joins in only if adult insists and assists

One-sided interaction

Indicates needs by using an adult's hand

Does not play with other children

Talks incessantly about only one topic

Echolalic - copies words like parrot

Bizarre behaviour

Handles or spins objects

Inappropriate laughing or giggling

Variety is not the spice of life

Lack of creative, pretend play

But some can do some things very well, very quickly but not tasks involving social understanding

No eye contact

- Difficulty with social relationships
- Difficulty with verbal communication
- Difficulty with non-verbal communication
- Difficulty in the development of play and imagination
- Resistance to change in routine

Early diagnosis is essential if people with autism are to achieve full potential. It is only when their handicap is understood that they can be helped to maximise skills and minimise problems.

